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Frontispiece.

Barbara's Brothers.

BARBARA'S BROTHERS.

BY

EVELYN EVERETT GREEN.

SIX ILLUSTRATIONS.

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BARBARA'S BROTHERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOCTOR'S FAMILY.

ABOUT a mile-and-a-half from the picturesque sea-coast of the west of England, and half a mile from the flourishing town of St. Hilda, stood a comfortable family mansion, substantially built of red brick, and shut in behind solid walls, that had evidently not been built yesterday. There was a rather extensive garden enclosed behind these walls, a garden gay with flowers during the greater part of the year, and lawns as smooth as velvet that sloped gently down to the river's brink, and rose again on the other side in thickly planted shrubberies.

There was a conservatory too, a greenhouse, and a range of hot-houses: the stables boasted their two or three sleek, well-kept horses, and the whole aspect of the place bespoke a comfortable opulence without any ostentation or actual extravagance.

Had you chanced to inquire of a passing rustic whose house it was, he would have eyed you with a kind of surprise at the dense ignorance displayed by such a question, and in his loquacious way would have proceeded to tell you that it was the doctor's house—Dr. Meynal's—the first physician in these, or, indeed, in any other parts; that Dr. Meynal, had been at St. Hilda as long as the oldest inhabitant could remember, and that each doctor had to keep one more horse than his predecessor, to meet the demands of his increasing practice; but that it was only the present Dr. Meynal who had bought this large house on the outskirts of the town, and he did so on his marriage with the Hon. Miss Talbot. Until that time a family mansion in the town itself had been the doctor's home.

And at the time my story opens, he would have added with a very grave face and a lugubrious shake of his head, that Dr. Meynal was just dead, and that nobody knew exactly what was going to happen.

All St. Hilda had been thrown into consternation by the sudden death of one of its most popular inhabitants. Dr. Meynal had grown up amongst them, like his father before him. He was a genial friend as well as a kind physician to each one of his patients,

gentle or simple; and at fifty-five he had appeared to be still in the prime of life, when he had suddenly collapsed before an attack of pneumonia, and was dead before the town had awakened to the knowledge that he was even seriously ill.

And now the questions in everyone's mouth were—What will happen? What arrangements would be made? What provision had been made for the family? What would become of the Meynals themselves, and of St. Hilda without a Dr. Meynal to prescribe for all its many ailments?

Those who knew the family best shook their heads when the question of provision was broached. Dr. Meynal was known to have expended his patrimony in the purchase of the Cedars, when he married his beautiful young portionless wife, and surrounded her with all those luxuries that her loveliness and fragility seemed to demand. True, the practice was large and lucrative—most likely it brought in some two or three thousand pounds a year—but then the expenditure of that household could not be much under that, and there seemed little probability of any substantial provisions having been made.

The misfortunes of some people appear to afford a sort of gloomy satisfaction to their

neighbors and acquaintances, but this was not the case with the Meynals, who had always kept open house, and shown a great deal of kindly hospitality to all comers. They were popular people in St. Hilda. Mrs. Meynal's helpless dependence and gentleness, Celia's beauty, Gerald's genius, and Barbara's frank impetuosity, had all won favor in the eyes of the inhabitants, and each one felt a real and keen sympathy with them in this time of sorrow and suspense.

Of the eldest son Wulfrie, St. Hilda knew little. His father was known to think highly of his talents, and the young man had spent the greater part of his time in London, where he was said to be carrying all before him, and laying the foundations of a brilliant and successful career.

Although Wulfrie had adopted the medical profession with the true Meynal instinct, St. Hilda had been somewhat astonished and half scandalised by Dr. Meynal's assertion that he did not intend the lad to succeed him in the practice. He believed that his son had a great career before him; the senior physician of his hospital had written many letters, loud in his praise; and as time passed by, and Wulfrie obtained hospital appointments, filled them with great success, and became an acknowl-

edged rising young man in the profession, Dr. Meynal was heard to speak more and more strongly of his determination never to allow him to waste his talents, and give up his scientific studies, for the daily drudgery of a country practice, and he sometimes even spoke of taking a nephew as assistant to the exclusion of his son.

This arrangement was understood to be contemplated with the full concurrence of the son, and Barbara, who was the most outspoken of the family, was sometimes heard to explain that "Wulf hated the country, and said one might as well be buried alive as be a doctor in a place like St. Hilda." He only cared for London, and was certain of getting fame and wealth there if he only had a fair chance, and were let alone to make his way upwards as he had already begun to do.

Just lately he had taken his M.D. at an unusually early age, and at the time of his father's death he was travelling in America, and his own people had been unable to communicate with him. He was due to return, however, in a few days, and much interest was caused by the speculation as to what his future course of conduct would be. Would he take up the practice as he found it, all ready to his hand (for St. Hilda was intensely conservative and

loyal to old traditions, and would rally to a man round Dr. Meynal's son); or would he return to his favorite studies, and his own career in the great city which he had so long made his home, and leave his family to do as best they might, and shift for themselves on Mrs. Meynal's scanty jointure, and the sum that would be realized by the sale of the house and of the practice?

Wulfrie was expected home very shortly. If he had seen his father's death in the papers any day might bring him, but even if not, the ship he had named as the one by which he meant to return, was due at Liverpool in a few days. He was a bad correspondent, and had kept them little informed as to his movements, but his ways were punctual and methodical, and as he had not written to advise them of any change of plan, he might be confidently expected by the vessel he had named previously.

And whilst he was on his way to his darkened home, unconscious of the loss that had robbed him of a father, his future career was being talked over and mapped out for him by St. Hilda in general, and his own family in particular.

"There is only one way possible," said Mrs. Meynal, with a languid gentleness that covered a good deal of latent determination and force of character. "Wulfrie must settle down and take

the practice; there will then be no break up of the home, and everything will be simplified."

Mrs. Meynal leaned back among her cushions with a long drawn sigh and drew her vinaigrette towards her. She was a delicately-made, fragile-looking woman with indications of what had once been great beauty, until time and ill health had left their traces upon her. Beauty of a kind she still had, a graceful figure, languid and refined manners, a musical voice, and clear, if somewhat sallow complexion.

It was to her two daughters that she had just made the remark expressive of her determination, and it was received in very different fashion by the sisters. Lovely, lily-like Celia, her mother's daughter in every respect, accepted the verdict as the expression of an inevitable fact about which there could be no manner of doubt; whilst dark-eyed Barbara flushed up hotly and pushed back the short, dark curls that clustered boy-fashion about her head, with a gesture common to her in her moods of impatience or vexation.

No two sisters could have presented a greater contrast than did Mrs. Meynal's daughters. Celia, with her limpid blue eyes, golden hair, tea-rose complexion, and all the languid, graceful elegance of her beautiful mother; Barbara, with her gipsy-like face, with its damask bloom and

glowing dark eyes, short, curly hair, and her quick, abrupt movements that bespoke an impetuous, impulsive nature. Barbara had been a great pet with the father whom she had passionately loved, but her mother felt with her rather as the hen is supposed to do with the proverbial duckling to rear.

When Mrs. Meynal had made her comment upon the future and Wulfrie's share in it, Celia roused herself to add,

"Yes, of course he must take the practice; what a good thing he has taken his degree. It will give people confidence in him, and they will like to think that there is still a Dr. Meynal in the place."

But Barbara looked up quickly and said,

"It is easy to say that Wulf *must*; but it remains to be proved if he will. He is his own master, and has his own career before him."

Mrs. Meynal smiled and said nothing; Celia looked at her sister and spoke rather impatiently.

"His career will be at St. Hilda now. He ought to be very glad to get such a good berth for himself and to be helpful to his family at the same time."

"Glad!" echoed Barbara, in an indignant undertone, as if she were not quite sure whether or not she meant to make herself heard. "Glad to have all his cherished prospects crushed just

when they seemed opening out before him so brightly! Glad to give up the life of wide interest and the companionship of kindred spirits that has made London so delightful to him, and settle down to the narrow, petty round of duties of a country doctor—to have nothing more exciting to think of than the ailments of St. Hilda! How many times has father told me of his thankfulness that Wulf was not tied down to the daily drudgery of a country practice. ‘I was born and brought up to it,’ he would say; ‘St. Hilda has been my home and all my roots have been struck into her soil; but I have brought Wulf up differently. He has had an education and training perfectly different from mine. What is enjoyment to me would be hopeless drudgery to him. Please God he shall never have to eat out his heart in the little world of St. Hilda.’ That is what father used to say.”

Mrs. Meynal turned away her head and said nothing. Celia spoke with much reproach in her tone.

“Barbara, how can you? You have no feeling.”

“Yes I have,” returned the girl in the same low, eager tone; “but I can’t bear for Wulf’s whole career to be spoilt, and his prospects blighted just that we may live a little more comfortably now. If the house and practice were sold, and I went out as a governess, and Gerald

went back to Mr. Dart's office—you know he offered to take him again—I am sure you and mother could live quite comfortably, and Wulf make a name for himself in his own way."

Celia quite roused up to answer such absurd propositions.

"I think you are perfectly crazy on the subject of Wulf. Pray who would have you as a governess, you careless, harum-scarum child? As for Gerald—you know he cannot endure the law. Mr. Dart's office would kill him, it nearly did before."

Barbara smiled disdainfully.

"Wulf is to do what he would detest, as a matter of course; but Gerald would be killed by a little distasteful occupation."

Celia was getting angry, but she restrained herself, as she felt an outbreak of temper would impair the dignity of her position.

"The two cases are not in the least parallel. Wulf is a qualified medical man, and an M. D., and it follows as a natural thing that he should take up the practice at a time like this; but Gerald in a lawyer's office—the thing is too absurd. He must live for his art."

"Gerald's art seems to me to be a pretty device for being idle and amusing himself."

"For shame on yourself, Barbara! Gerald has undoubted genius. Some day when he has

made a great name, you will be ashamed, I hope, of the slighting way you speak of him now."

Barbara's lip curled slightly.

"When!" she repeated, with a scepticism she made no attempt to veil. "Ah, yes, when that day comes I will be very humble; and meantime he is to live in clover and do nothing, whilst Wulf slaves for the whole family, and wastes his talents and eats out his heart in the drudgery father was so determined he should be spared. Well, it will be just like Gerald to acquiesce in such an arrangement. So long as he is comfortable, he cares for nothing else."

Both sisters were growing excited by this time, when Mrs. Meynal stopped the discussion by plaintively complaining that they made her head ache with their chatter. She added that Wulfrie—like a sensible man—ought to be very thankful for so good a start in life, and have learned by this time how unlikely it was for him to get anything better. Competition was too keen in these days for young men to indulge in high-flown notions.

Barbara was silenced but not convinced. She gave up the battle, but brooded in silence a good deal over the matter all the rest of that day. She was haunted by a sense of the

injustice and selfishness of those about her. She rose next day feeling an unwholesome bitterness at heart. She determined to bridle her tongue if she could; but it seemed as if the subject was to haunt her.

"And so, Bab, you think I ought to go back to my beloved office-stool, and the delightful society of quill-pens and parchment, in order that the great Wulf may set the Thames on fire at his leisure—eh?"

The speaker was a very good-looking fellow of five-and-twenty, who was lounging in an indolent attitude upon one of the many cushioned couches of Mrs. Meynal's drawing-room, and turning the leaves of an illustrated magazine with an air of critical discrimination. Celia was engaged in some delicate bit of fancy work, and the pair had evidently been exchanging confidences, for as Barbara chanced to enter before starting for a walk in the clear spring sunshine, this was the greeting she received from her brother Gerald.

She flushed a little, but answered, boldly, "If I were a man I should not like to be dependent upon my brother when I had an opening for gaining my own livelihood."

Gerald laughed good temperedly enough.

"Babies and girls are always very grand on that theme. So you thought of turning gover-

ness yourself, eh, Bab? My dear child, you don't seem in the least to realise the fact that if we are somewhat indebted to Wulfrie for his ability to take the practice, he is quite as much in debt to us for giving it to him."

Barbara evidently did not realise it in the least, and looked so very much astonished that Gerald laughed again.

"Don't you know, my child, that Wulf's modest patrimony has been entirely exhausted in his very expensive education, his allowance all these years, and the travels he has taken? He has cost double and treble what all the rest of us put together have done; and that being the case, and he being in a position to make his own way, father left him nothing but his library and instruments, whilst house, practice, money, all come to us and to mother."

"Well?" asked Barbara, as Gerald paused.

"Well, can't you see even yet? Wulf, with no practice, and no money to buy one, and only his talents and the uncertain patronage of friends to depend on, would be in a very poor way; but we offer him a comfortable home and a lucrative practice, only burdened by the conditions that the home is kept up for the benefit of all. Business is business, you know, even in families, and if Wulf is not a very obliged person he is a greater fool than I take him for."

Barbara was so astonished at this utterly new way of stating the case that she was some time in answering.

"If the obligation is all on Wulf's side," she said by-and-by, slowly and reflectively—"I don't believe it is so really—but if it is, I think you will find that he will prefer poverty, and hard work, and London. He will not be poor long. I don't believe he will be poor at all. He could get a hospital appointment, I am certain, at any time. He always likes hospital work. If he isn't urgently wanted here to keep a home over our heads, I am certain he will stay in London."

Gerald flushed a little, but only said, carelessly: "That is a point that Wulf must settle for himself. I did not say the obligation was all on one side; I said it was mutual. As a man of common sense, he will see the only rational course open to him. Wulf is a good fellow enough, Barbara, but he is not a hero of romance. He knows quite well which side of his bread is buttered, and how to take care of himself. A certain practice and large income are not to be despised."

"Especially when the income is not to be his own."

Gerald smiled gently.

"Wulf will be able to look after his own

interests, most fiery of Babs. Don't you be afraid for him. I only wish I had such a chance."

Barbara laughed a laugh that was less good tempered than Gerald's had been.

"You, indeed! As if you would ever avail yourself of any chance that involved hard work! You will be dependent on Wulf to the end of the chapter—you will never make a penny by your precious art."

"Barbara, for shame!" cried Celia; but Gerard only smiled in his tranquil fashion.

"Let her talk—it amuses her, and does me no harm. For the rest, my dear child, Wulf is very well able to look after his own interests. When he is tired of my society, he can pay me off, and turn me out. He is quite capable of it."

"You know he is no such thing," flashed out Barbara, hotly. "You know he is generosity itself, and you presume upon what you pretend to despise. You always sneer at Wulf—call him a diamond in the rough——"

"So he is, my dear child," interposed Gerald, calmly, "very much in the rough indeed."

Barbara caught her breath with a sort of angry gasp, and proceeded, hotly—

"Yes, that is always the way you talk—as if you were a superior being, and Wulf the

dust beneath your feet. You jeer at him, and hold him up to ridicule all the time you are planning to live luxuriously upon the proceeds of his talents. I scorn such meanness and such ungenerous subterfuges. You make me scorn you, too."

And, Barbara, as if afraid to stay longer in the room, flung herself out as unexpectedly as she had entered.

"Whew!" whistled Gerald, "what a storm in a tea-cup, to be sure. The superfluous energy of our little sister is quite fatiguing to witness;" and then he strolled to the piano, and began singing softly to himself, as if nothing in the world could ruffle his placid spirits.

Barbara meantime pursued her way, hot indignation flushing her cheek and lighting her eye, until rapid exercise began to relieve the pressure of her mind, and she relaxed her speed by degrees, feeling a little ashamed of her outburst of passion, though in no wise shaken in her own opinions of the case at issue.

"I wish I could conquer my hasty temper," she said to herself, with a little sigh. "Father spoke to me about it as he lay dying, and I promised him I would. I felt then as if I never could be angry again, and now, in less

than a month, I feel just as passionate and angry as ever. I wonder what it is makes me so hasty. I sometimes feel like an Ishmaelite amongst them all, and I am afraid they feel the same about me themselves. I wonder whose fault it is. Mine, I suppose. Yet Gerald and Celia are very, very provoking, and so selfish; I do hate selfishness."

And then the girl stopped short, and some words her father had spoken to her not many hours before his death recurred to her memory.

"And you, my dear child, will struggle, I know, against your besetting sins—hasty tempers, and unkind judgment of others."

Had she been doing so to-day?

CHAPTER II.

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS.

BARBARA'S walk that day was taken with a purpose, and that purpose was only stimulated by the rather stormy interview she had just had with her brother. She felt as we all of us do, especially when we are young, that she wanted help and sympathy, and it did not seem to poor Barbara as if either of these good things was to be had within the walls of her home.

Her present destination was a small house in a very well-kept garden that stood amongst tall pine-trees not far from the cliff. It was a pretty and picturesque cottage, over which an atmosphere of peace and calm seemed to brood, as if, for its inhabitants at least, the battle of life were over, and the burden and heat of the day merged in the rest of eventide.

Barbara was evidently quite at home in this quiet home. She did not pause to ring the bell, but walked into the hall, and opened a door to the right that led into a small, but exceedingly quaint and pretty drawing-room.

This room had two tenants; the first an old lady of nearly seventy summers, with a snowy mob cap and spotlessly neat attire, who was knitting in an easy chair with an open book before her; the second a young girl of perhaps two and twenty, who was also reading and making pencil notes as she did so, and whose face expressed by its lines and general expression, a kind of chronic restlessness and dissatisfaction. Both looked up as Barbara entered and greeted her with affection; but about the girl's manner there hung that inevitable constraint that generally makes difficult the first interview after a heavy trouble.

Mrs. Granby, however, had grown out of such embarrassments. She drew the girl towards her, and asked after all at home with a quiet composure of manner, that expressed sympathy without obtruding it; and Barbara was not long in finding out what a relief it was to have a friend like Mrs. Granby to whom she could pour out all her heart.

So out it all came—the difficulties of the position, the difficult choice that lay before Wulfrie, the opinions of the majority, and Barbara's own indignant feeling that her favorite brother would be called upon to make a great sacrifice on behalf of his family, and be burdened with claims that must be an incubus

upon him all his life; whilst all the time the fiction would be kept up that he was a lucky fellow, and that the debt of obligation was at least equally divided, if not altogether on his side.

"And you know, Mrs. Granby, they all said he had such a career before him in London. His senior surgeon and physician at the hospital both think so very highly of him. One of them has almost promised to take him into partnership in a few years' time. He has done so well in his examinations, too; and to think of his being forced to give up everything he cares for, and sacrifice all his prospects to come and settle down as a humdrum country doctor. Oh, I can't bear to think of it!"

"He won't do it!" cried Juliet. "He ought not to do it. One might as well be buried alive as live in a place like this. Oh, if I were a man, I would be off to-morrow—be off, never, never to return any more!" And Juliet clasped her hands together, and her eyes glowed almost fiercely.

But Barbara was looking at Mrs. Granby. She had heard Juliet's views on St. Hilda and its life many times before. It was the grandmother's opinions on the case she was anxious to have. Mrs. Granby had smiled a

quiet little smile at Juliet's vehement speech; but now her face was grave and thoughtful.

"Your brother has not come home yet? You have not been able to learn his own wishes?"

"Not from his own lips; but there is no need of that to find out what his wishes will be. He has chosen his career for life, and his choice did not fall upon life at St. Hilda. The only question is whether he will be coerced into it now through force of circumstances."

"Or from a sense of duty," added Mrs. Granby, quietly.

Barbara looked at her quickly.

"Do you think it is his duty to sacrifice everything for us?" she asked, rather blankly.

"I think the question would require very close investigation. I should not like to pronounce hastily upon it; but, my dear, so long as a son has no wife to think for, his first duty is to his mother. Your mother is a widow now, and in feeble health, and Wulfrie is the eldest son, and has qualified himself to take his father's place at the head of the household."

"He did not qualify himself for that," murmured Barbara, almost resentfully.

"Man proposes, God disposes," answered

Mrs. Granby, with a smile that was very still and sweet. "We try to map out our lives for ourselves sometimes, but if we insist on taking the management out of his hands, he shows us our mistake later. Let us try to do our duty first, and leave the rest to him. His blessing will more than make up for all we seem to renounce. It seems a hard creed to us when we are young, but as we grow old and see our lives in perspective, God shows us the truth of his own words, that without him we can do nothing, whilst with him we can do all things. To do as his will seems to direct should be the aim and object of our lives."

Barbara made no reply, but Juliet broke in hastily, "I don't see that religion has anything to do with it, grandmother. I can't bear always mixing things up together. Wulfrie may have to give up his own ambition possibly—though I think it would be a horrid shame if he has—to take Dr. Meynal's place; but if he does it, it will be just from a simple sense of duty. It hasn't got anything to do with religion, any more than the ordinary everyday things of life."

Juliet spoke with a good deal of covert irritability, and Mrs. Granby smiled as she said, quietly, "Perhaps if our religion entered

a little more into the everyday things of life, we should be wiser and happier than we are."

But Juliet turned away impatiently, whilst Barbara said, "I think Wulf will try to do his duty."

"I think he will, too."

"Only I do so wish it could be his duty to go back to London, and go on as he and father always meant him to. I'm afraid you think his duty is to stay here, Mrs. Granby," and she looked half wistfully into the old lady's face.

"I never like to pronounce judgment hastily, and there may be points connected with Wulfrie's affairs of which I am ignorant; but I confess, it seems to me the wisest course open to him at present. He is the only member of the household that can keep things going, and he has no ties upon him—only a professional ambition to sacrifice. We all have to make sacrifices at some time in our lives, and we are generally the better for them afterwards. We have one great example always before us in him who pleased not himself."

A softer look crossed Barbara's face.

"I will try to think of that," she said, "but I am afraid I never shall be good. I do try, but I forget so soon as it all goes—and I have such a hasty temper."

Mrs. Granby smiled, and patted Barbara's clasped hands which lay upon her lap, as the girl sat at her feet. Barbara was a favorite with her, and had been from her babyhood upwards. The frank brightness of the girl pleased her, and she had plenty of sympathy for her wilful, wayward moods. She did not answer now, but looked in Barbara's face, and her eyes said a great deal.

And if the girl did not get quite the kind of sympathy she had hoped for, at any rate she went away soothed and comforted; and another incident that occurred on her way home gave to her additional pleasure.

She was pursuing her road from the coast to the town, when she saw advancing towards her on horseback a girl of about her own age, and she said to herself, "Miss Dumaresq—how pretty she is!"

Mr. and Mrs. Dumaresq had lately taken and settled down in a large house near to the coast. It was the ill-health of the former that had induced them to give up their gay London life and come to this quiet place; and as they were "county people," and reported to be exceedingly wealthy and well connected, St. Hilda had been somewhat diffident in making their acquaintance, and at present they were but little known.

Dr. Meynal had attended Mr. Dumaresq, and calls had been exchanged between the ladies of the different houses; but no sense of intimacy had so far been established, and as it happened, Barbara had never exchanged a word with the daughter of the house. She was the more surprised, therefore, when the girl reined up as she reached her side, and looked down at her with a peculiar shy sweetness in her dark eyes.

"Please excuse me," said Reinée Dumaresq, in a very gentle, musical voice, "but I felt I could not pass you without telling you how very, very sorry I am—for your sad loss."

The genuine ring of sympathy in the words brought unexpected tears to Barbara's eyes. Reinée saw them, and held out her little gloved hand—an answering glitter on her own long lashes.

"I am so sorry," she said again; "I have such a dear father—and he is ill—" and then her voice quivered a little, though she smiled bravely and sweetly as she moved away, as if half afraid of trusting herself to say more.

"That is Barbara," said Reinée to herself, as she rode along in the sunshine, "the one whose face I like in church, though the other sister is prettier. Juliet Granby says she is clever, and I am sure she is nice—she is so

fond of her father. I should like her for my friend. I must ask mamma if I may invite her—she let me know Juliet directly. I think I like her face better than Juliet's. Perhaps she will help me to realise my ideal."

Barbara Meynal, Juliet Granby, and Reinée Dumaresq were all the same age—twenty-two—an age when childish things have been put away, when the soul begins to be stirred by the infinite possibilities of life, and yearns after all that is high and holy, beautiful and lofty, with a confidence in its own powers of realising an ideal that experience often sadly shakes and too often annihilates altogether. It is a time of mental growth and change, a time when life and its responsibilities assume new meanings and new importance, a time when the character often takes a decided bent either for good or ill, sometimes the motive power being from within, sometimes receiving an impression from the world without—an impression often stamped so deeply that the mark of it is never afterwards effaced. But whether for good or for evil, the impressions received at such a time do much to mould the unfolding mind.

Barbara and Juliet had led lives of great and unbroken seclusion at St. Hilda and had never known another home; but Reinée's life

had been one of ceaseless gaiety and variety. The only daughter of her parents, she had been indulged and petted from her babyhood upwards, and her peculiarly bright and engaging disposition, as well as her grace and beauty, had made her an universal favorite wherever she had gone. Even in the nursery and school-room days she had never been shut up as many children and young girls are, and soon after she was seventeen she emerged from her nominal seclusion and went everywhere with her parents.

Courted, flattered, caressed and admired, with every wish of her heart gratified, and every fancy indulged, Reinée stood in great danger of being utterly spoiled, and of growing into a mere pleasure-seeker, with no thoughts above the enjoyment of the hour and the gratification of flattered vanity. It would have been small blame to her had she grown selfish, frivolous and conceited, for she had everything to make her so; and yet, in some wonderful way, she had been saved from being spoilt by the dangers of her position, or from falling into the snares spread around her.

Perhaps from seeing so much of the gay world of fashion, Reinée had early been able to see that the glitter was not all gold.

Reinée had never had any religious teaching

save of the most conventional kind, yet her nature was deeply devotional. She had yearnings after the great infinities that surround our little span of life, and all her thoughts and actions were tinged by a little mysticism that gave to her a subtle charm, that few had been at pains to analyse. She had a deep belief in good, both abstract and concrete, and the hollowness of much that she had heard called good in the life she had led, had not shaken her convictions one whit. But she was deeply conscious of her own ignorance; she knew that she was feeling about in a semi-darkness for the light that was bright enough somewhere, and she wanted to find some friend in whom she could confide: some friend who would understand her vague aspirations, and would be able to give them more tangible form. She would have to find out what her ideal was before she could hope to live up to it.

She began to form rather more definite ideas here in this quiet country place than she had ever done before, and her mind was very active to-day, as she enjoyed her evening ride; and during the dinner hour that day she was a little abstracted, though rousing herself to talk to her father of her ride, and the loveliness of the country she had seen. Mr. Dum-

aresq idolised his daughter, and delighted to look at her and to hear her talk. He forgot his languor and weakness when she was at his side.

When mother and daughter were alone together after their return to the drawing-room, Reinée began to lead up to a question that had been a good deal in her thoughts of late.

"Mamma," she began, "I met Miss Barbara Meynal when I was out to-day. She is the younger daughter, you know. I think she was very fond indeed of her father. Her face was so sad, I could not help stopping to speak to her."

"What to say?"

"Oh! only to tell her how sorry I was. Just leaving cards at the house seems so cold and formal. I think I should like Barbara Meynal, mamma."

"Well, my dear, I have no particular objection. I do not care, as you know, about rushing into intimacies with people before one knows anything about them; but all we hear of the Meynals is quite satisfactory. She was a Talbot before she married, I hear, and his family is very much respected here. Do not be precipitate; but if you and the Meynal girls get on together, I have no objection to

the friendship. You must, of course, have some friends, and as there is no society, in the ordinary sense of the term, you must make the best of such people as we find here for the present; and as soon as your father is better we can ask people down, and, in the course of time, I hope to be able to leave this place and resume our old life."

Reinée did not look as if she reciprocated this hope. She half smiled, and shook her head slightly.

"I think I like the country, mamma."

Mrs. Dumaresq looked languidly amused.

"It is the change you like, Reinée. All young things like variety, and it so happens that quiet and seclusion are just the experiences you most lack, and, therefore, now enjoy; but you will have a different tale to tell six months later, when the novelty has worn off, and we have winter before us instead of summer."

Reinée made no answer. She never argued with her mother; but she was not convinced. She was silent for awhile, and then serewed up her courage to say what was on her mind.

"Mamma," she began, speaking quietly and easily, "I have a favor to ask of you."

"Well, Reinée?"

Mrs. Dumaresq eyed her daughter rather

keenly, for Reinée was so much in the habit of having everything given that she wanted, that this formal way of asking a favor seemed rather odd. The mother always had a latent suspicion that her child would some day or another surprise her by new and unexpected developments, that their inner life was less in accord than that upon the surface; but she was not in the least aware that Reinée was far more conscious of this than she was.

"Mamma, I want to know, now that things are so different from what they were in London, whether I may not be a little different, too? You see, I have such a great deal more time on my hands than ever I had before."

Reinée spoke very quietly, and without any visible excitement. She had chosen a time to make known her request when she and her mother were alone together, and had done so from a sense of duty that showed no little conscientiousness. She knew that her father could never bear to deny her anything, and was certain to take her side; but she had long ago determined never to allow herself to act on the authority of one parent contrary to the wishes of the other, or to use her father's easily-won consent to any scheme of hers, to set at defiance her mother's wishes. By steadily adhering to this resolve, Reinée,

though often placed in a difficult position, had always avoided being a bone of contention between her father and mother.

"Indeed, you have," replied Mrs. Dumaresq; "we could all well spare a good half of the time we have on our hands now. What plan have you for getting rid of yours?"

"I thought I should like to know a little more about the poor people who live around us," said Reinée, in the same quiet way. "In London, I had no time; besides, you would not have liked it, and one never knew how to begin even. But it is different in the country, and the cottages look pretty and clean. I should like to know something about the people who live in them."

Mrs. Dumaresq's eyes were fixed steadily upon her daughter; but Reinée did not falter; she only wondered a little what made her mother look like that. It seemed almost as if there was suspicion in her gaze.

"What has put the idea into your head?"

"I hardly know; partly seeing the people in their houses, partly because I always thought it would be nice to live in the country and be friends with the poor people. You see, mamma, I have never done anything all my life but enjoy myself—I think I have got quite tired of it."

Reinée spoke simply and frankly, and Mrs. Dumaresq smiled and her face relaxed a little.

"Well, Reinée," she said, "there is something in that, I admit. Everything palls upon us at times, and youth craves variety at all costs, even exchanging better for worse. You are sure you have no ulterior motive?"

Reinée looked up innocently.

"I don't quite understand you, mamma."

"No? Well, I do not know why I should not explain. You are old enough now to understand. I was afraid that you had perhaps got hold of some fantastic religious notions."

Reinée colored a little; but her eyes did not waver.

"Is there any harm in religion, mamma?" she asked, quietly.

"No, not in the ordinary use of the term. Religion is a very good thing in its way, a very right and proper thing, and does a great deal of good. You have been religiously brought up, in so far as is necessary, and, on the whole, you do credit to your training. But this is an age of extravagance and enthusiasm, and people find it very convenient to mask their eccentricities, their self-will and vagaries of all sorts under a mask of religious fervor, that will, they think, save them from criticism and rebuke."

Reinée's eyes were fixed inquiringly on her mother's face. She listened with great attention; but could not see the personal bearing of the matter.

"What has that got to do with me, mamma?" she asked, as her mother paused. "I don't think I quite understand you."

"Well, I am glad you do not. It shows my suspicions to have been unfounded."

"What suspicions, mamma?"

"That you might be inclined to shift into a sort of pseudo-religious state of mind that would probably unfit you for your future life."

Reinée was a little perplexed.

"I thought religion was to help us on in life, mamma," she said.

"Yes, my dear, so it is; but there is a kind of religion that has just the contrary effect, and that gives rise to a very great deal of trouble."

"How?"

"Well, I will explain if I can. You have asked to be allowed to visit the poor people round here. I may, or may not, consent to your following out this fancy, according as I am satisfied as to its origin. If you are actuated by a love of variety, a wish to occupy your time profitably, and a feeling that it is right and proper to show kindness to those

about you, I should have no objection to countenance such a proceeding. If, however, I found you entertaining extravagant ideas of universal brotherhood, believing that every woman ought to be a sort of sister-of-mercy in disguise, and feeling that some religious vocation must be the object of every life, I should feel constrained to nip in the bud any experiment likely to prove so dangerous."

"Dangerous, mamma, how?"

"It is dangerous to allow any one idea to have the mastery, and nothing is more insidious than the belief, so rampant amongst girls just now, that they must do some great 'work' in the world, and set all law and order at defiance. They tell themselves they are obeying and pleasing God, but they are very plainly paining and disobeying their parents. How they reconcile this to their consciences is not for me to say; I can only say that I have often heard stories that make me say 'Preserve us from religion,' and make me determine that my daughter shall never be exposed to like influences."

Reinée rose and crossed over to her mother and knelt down before her.

"Mamma, dear," she said, softly, "I do not think religion would ever make people disobedient—not real religion."

"Perhaps not: but that which passes under its name does, and I am not versed in subtleties."

"Things are not always called by their right names," observed Reinée, thoughtfully. "Mamma, I will do just as you decide about that. I would rather please you than myself."

Reinée at any rate was not spoiled by over-indulgence. Mrs. Dumaresq smiled as if well pleased, as her eyes rested on her daughter's face.

"You are a good child," she said, patting her on the head. "You deserve your own way for being so ready to give it up. I will think things over and give you an answer later. I have no objection to a little of the Lady Bountiful in the place, and you would play the part well."

Reinée was not quite sure if that was exactly what she herself wished: but her ideas were a little vague, and it was no use to press matters on unduly. She might begin by playing Lady Bountiful; but she had a dim consciousness that that part would not satisfy her always. She felt that she would like to be a friend as well as a benefactor.

But for the present no more was said, and Reinée hardly knew whether or not her request had been granted.

CHAPTER III.

WULFRIC'S RETURN.

"It's Wulf!" cried Barbara, suddenly throwing down her book and springing to the door "He has come, after all!"

The Meynals were sitting together in the drawing-room after dinner, and had just calculated that it would be impossible for Wulfrie to reach St. Hilda that night, as his ship was only expected to reach Liverpool that morning, when the sound of a voice in the hall drew from Barbara's lips the exclamation.

Hardly had she spoken when the door opened and the traveller stood before them.

"Well, how are you all? Don't strangle me, Barbara. Mother, how are you? Were you expecting me to-night? Did you see that my ship was in?"

He spoke these words in a deep, powerful voice that was quite in harmony with the massive proportions of his figure. He stooped to kiss his mother and his sister as he spoke, and shook hands with Gerald, who answered his question.

"We did not think you could be here before to-morrow. We thought you would spend the night in London."

"No, I came by Bristol. I found I could just manage it. I was anxious not to lose time."

"I dare say you have had nothing to eat all day," said Barbara, who was of a domestic turn. "I will go and see about some dinner for you."

"Thanks," answered her brother; and as Barbara vanished a silence fell upon the little group.

Wulfrie stood with his back to the fire, his face set in lines of deep thought, and a heavy cloud resting upon his brow. At no time was he much of a talker, and now, coming back to his bereaved family, with only a few hours' notice of their common loss, his words seemed even less ready than usual.

"You got my letter?" asked Gerald at length.

"Yes, in Liverpool this morning, when we got in."

"Was it the first intimation you had? You had not seen it in the papers?"

"No; I had been out of the beat of papers for some weeks. I knew nothing till I got that letter."

"You left us so long without an address," said his mother, plaintively.

"I could not help it. My movements were quite uncertain. When did it happen?"

"Nearly a month ago."

"It was very sudden, you said?"

"Yes. He was only ill for a few days. It was inflammation of the lungs."

Mrs. Meynal put her handkerchief to her eyes with a little sob. Wulfrie drew his bushy eye-brows together.

"So a telegram could not have brought me in time, even if you had had my address," he observed, slowly, and there was something of relief in the tone.

"No, I suppose not," sighed Mrs. Meynal; "but if you could have been summoned home immediately it would have saved us immense anxiety and difficulty."

"Difficulty about what?"

"About the practice. It has been waiting for you all this time—it has been very inconvenient to many people."

Wulfrie stood very still, looking fixedly into the lamp burning on the table opposite. He was a very tall, powerful man, broad-shouldered and deep-chested, with clean-cut, muscular limbs, and a physical strength in proportion to his unusual stature. His face was

striking in expression, from its determination and force of will; but most people at a first glance would have called Wulfrie Meynal an ugly man. His features were cast in a rugged mould, and were without regularity or symmetry of form. His hair was very dark and thick and invincibly curly, and unless cut very close, which it seldom was, somewhat resembled a lion's mane, and gave him a shaggy and characteristic appearance that made Gerald shrug his shoulders in a sort of fraternal despair. His eyes were very dark and piercing, large, deeply set in his head, and overhung by thick, black brows. He wore neither beard nor moustache, so there was nothing to soften the stern set of the square jaw, or the resolute determination expressed by the lines of the mouth. Wulfrie Meynal would never pass unnoticed, go where he would, but his was a face likely to inspire fear rather than affection.

Wulfrie had never been a favorite at home, save with his father and Barbara. He had been much away from boyhood upwards, and had always been something of a stranger, even to his own people; but his youngest sister had always had a warm admiration for him, and if she stood a little in awe of him, it did not hinder her from being his staunch champion and ally.

Wulfrie was fond of his little sister. He was not demonstrative, nor very susceptible, yet he had always had a soft spot in his heart for Barbara; and although her determined and not too well-judged championship of him, in season and out of season, had been the cause of some annoyance to him at times, he had never allowed her to see how very gladly he would have dispensed with it.

And now that he had come back to this changed and shadowed house, he was quite aware that it was with Barbara he wished to talk matters quietly over; that it was to her that he must look for any real confidence, comprehension or sympathy.

He stepped across the hall in a few minutes to the dining-room, where he found Barbara waiting for him with a substantial repast spread upon the table. He sat down to it mechanically, yet did not at first attempt to eat, but rested his head on his hand in an attitude of deep abstraction. Barbara came up slowly and stood close beside him without speaking, and presently Wulfrie put his arm about her—an unusual demonstration from him, and for some time the silence between them was unbroken. At length he moved, put her gently away with a long-drawn breath like a sigh, and began slowly

and absently to help himself to what was before him. His face wore a look that Barbara did not quite understand. She stood regarding him earnestly. "Are you very tired, Wulf?"

"No, not particularly."

"Something is the matter?"

He raised his eyes slowly to hers.

"Remember that what is a month old to you, is new to me. You are used to the blank in the house—but I am not."

Barbara was silent and the tears gathered slowly in her eyes.

"I don't think I shall ever get used to it!" she said, unsteadily. "It seems like losing everything."

Wulfrie made no answer; but Barbara knew he understood. He and his father had been always deeply attached.

She busied herself with attending to his creature comforts, and he let her wait upon him, and ate more to please her than from any sense of hunger. Both knew well how many times she had waited thus upon their father, when he had come in late and weary from a heavy day's work. It had always been Barbara's greatest pleasure to sit with him whilst he took his repast, and chatter to him of all the simple events of the day.

But she did not chatter now; she felt tongue-tied and constrained. There was much that she wished to discuss with her brother, many questions she was longing to ask, but for the moment she was as silent as he.

As at length he began to sip the coffee she had made for him, in the way she knew he liked it, and turning a little away from the table, he said, quietly, "Now, tell me all about it."

Barbara commanded herself as well as she could whilst she related the short story of her father's illness and death.

Wulfrie listened with close attention.

"Did he leave any message for me?"

"His love—his love and blessing. I think you were very much in his thoughts. Ah, why were you not here? Why did he die just then?"

Wulfrie was silent for some time, and then he spoke again: "Did he leave no message as to his wishes respecting the future? Did he say nothing as to what he wished me to do about the practice?"

Barbara hesitated, and twisted her hands together.

"In his will everything was left to mother and to us."

"I know, that was arranged between us. I

had my portion spent upon my education. What I mean is, did he express any wish—did he say whether or not he thought it advisable for me to succeed him here?”

“He said that was a point you must decide for yourself. He said you would be certain to act rightly towards all. It was not for him to settle, he said, his mind was not sufficiently clear; but you were sure to see your duty, and do it, whatever it might be. He left the decision to you without a single misgiving.”

Wulfrie was silent. His dark eyes were fixed upon his sister's face, and yet he did not seem to see her. Barbara had spoken as if under compulsion whilst she had told him her father's words; but when these had been spoken she drew her breath hard, and suddenly broke out with great impetuosity; “Oh, Wulf, Wulf! Don't do it! don't do it!”

He started, and looked at her in surprise.

“Don't do what, Barbara?”

“Take the practice and bury yourself at St. Hilda. Don't do it, Wulf—don't!”

He smiled a little grimly and made no reply, but went on asking questions.

“How have things been going on since? Who has been looking after people?”

“The surgery assistant has done what he can and people have just been waiting—”

Barbara stopped short suddenly, and Wulfrie concluded with great composure, "Until I came back to take my father's place."

"No!" cried Barbara, quickly, "till you came back to see what was to be done: I say, let the house and practice be sold. Then we shall have plenty to live upon, and you can go and make your fortune in London."

Wulfrie smiled again, in the same rather grim way.

"And is that the expression of the general opinion of the family? Does that embody the public wish?"

Barbara hung her head and pressed her hands closely together, sighing impatiently.

"Ah!" said Wulfrie, and said no more.

Presently Barbara looked up quickly. "Wulf," she said, "you must make a firm stand. They do want to sacrifice your career to their present ease and comfort; but you ought not to allow it; I'm sure you ought not. They can't make you, and you ought not to submit. You would so hate the life."

"Possibly; but that's not the question."

"But it ought to be. There is no reason on earth why you should be sacrificed to us. We shall get along very well somehow, and you will grow rich and famous in London, as you could never do here, and will be much

more useful to us in the end. You must not sacrifice yourself for us. It would be such folly in the long run—you with your talents to rust away down here!”

She spoke impulsively, but Wulfrie's face never moved from its set lines of care and thought.

“Life is a great lottery, Barbara,” he said, slowly and almost sadly. “Very few men live to realise their ambition, or to reach their goal. Fame and fortune are not won in a day, and at best they are fickle mistresses to serve. You have no idea, little sister, what a hard battle is life in these hurrying days of crowding and competition; and so long as I have health and strength to work for you, you never shall know.”

Barbara looked at him, her lips compressed, her eyes aglow. Was that the expression of his real determination? Was his mind already made up?

“Wulf!” she cried, catching her breath, “do you mean that your mind is really made up? You have had no time to think it over. You should not decide in such a hurry.”

Wulfrie smiled in his enigmatic fashion.

“I have had a whole day to think,” he answered, quietly, “and some days are like a lifetime.”

Barbara sighed impatiently.

"Suppose father had left a message telling you not to?"

"He did not do anything of the kind. The message he did leave is clear enough to me. He saw my duty, as I see it, plainly enough."

"I don't believe he did—"

"But I am sure of it, and it is in my hands that the matter lies."

"I think too much fuss can be made about duty. Duty is not everything."

Wulfrie made no reply.

"Wulf!" cried Barbara, almost angrily: "Don't be so impenetrable. Don't you see that you have a duty to yourself to think of, too?"

Wulfrie turned upon her the sombre light of his eyes.

"There will be time enough to think of that when I have done my duty to the mother who is left dependent upon me, if not for the necessities of life exactly, yet for the ease and luxuries which have become to her almost necessary, and with which, in her delicate state of health, she could ill afford to dispense. You who know so little of the difficulties of life, may talk glibly of the capital raised by the sale of house and practice; but when you come to try to live upon the interest of the money, you would soon begin to learn a great

many new lessons as to the relative value of things. No, Barbara, so long as I can keep the practice together, and give my mother the home to which she has been accustomed, so long my place is here, and here I shall stay. What may happen in the future I cannot tell, but, during her lifetime, St. Hilda shall be her home as long as she wants to stay, if any exertions of mine can keep her there; and Celia and you will be with her as a matter of course. I dare say you will both be married long before there is any break up of the old home."

Wulfric spoke with a quiet decision that Barbara felt it useless to combat; moreover, his words brought home to her a certain sense of conviction.

"What about Gerald?" she asked by and by. "Are you going to keep him, too?"

"I must see about that. I suppose with his talents he will soon be making name and fortune for himself."

Barbara laughed oddly.

"Wulf, surely you do not believe in Gerald's art?"

"It's a subject I know nothing whatever about. All I know is that everybody sings in praise of his genius: he is said to be a rising star in the world of poetry and art."

"Everybody!" repeated Barbara with scorn. "That means Gerald himself and the disciples he teaches. Mother and Celia believe in him because they take him at his own valuation, but I know better. He idles away all his time in talking of his unrivalled genius."

"You were always down on Gerald," remarked Wulfric, very calmly. "He isn't in your style or mine, I admit; but in his own way he may be a very clever fellow for aught I know."

"It is an intolerably conceited one," answered Barbara, hotly. "You should hear the way he talks of you, and the lofty airs he gives himself. If you're wise, Wulf, you will make him go back to Mr. Dart's office and work for a living. He will never do anything by himself."

Wulfric's jaw was set in lines expressive of a sort of grim amusement.

"You forget that Gerald is of age, and not my slave to do my bidding. If he declined the law when my father wished him to take to it, he is not likely to go back at my instigation."

"You could say you would not keep him in idleness."

"This house is not mine; the practice is a sort of gift from all of you. I have no right

to take a high hand with anybody. Come, Barbara, we have discussed this matter long enough. I ought to be thought a lucky fellow for getting such a chance of a practice."

"You know you always said you should hate to be a country doctor."

"Grapes were sour then."

Barbara tossed her head impatiently.

"You can say what you like, but you know you are simply sacrificing yourself for us."

"I know that I am availing myself of a capital opening, and that you are a little goose."

"It is easy to talk. Of course, I know that you will be earning a good income; but who will have the spending of it? It will do you precious little good. It will all be spent in keeping up the house as mother likes it, and in supporting us."

"Very well, so much the better. You don't suppose I want to spend a couple of thousand a year upon my wearing apparel, do you?"

Barbara was surprised into a sudden laugh. Wulfric's carelessness about his outward man and disregard for appearances were proverbial.

"And I don't even believe you will really take the position of master of the house. Gerald is always on the spot, making himself out to be the great man of the place."

Wulfric laughed carelessly.

"He is very welcome to the distinction."

"It's all very well for you to talk so coolly; but it will be hateful. Gerald can be horrid, and he always is where you are concerned. He will try to put you down, and patronise you, whilst all the time he is a sort of pensioner upon your bounty."

"Don't get into a nasty, sneering way about Gerald, Barbara. It's ungenerous and unsisterly, and I don't like it."

Barbara flushed hotly, yet she was not vexed with Wulfric for the reproof, and hazarded a final shot.

"You will just sacrifice life and prospects and everything, and you will not even be thanked for it."

Wulfric rose leisurely from his seat.

"Well, if you wanted to hold out an inducement, Barbara, you could not have picked upon a better one."

The group in the drawing-room waited for Wulfric's return with a certain suppressed anxiety. They felt a good deal of uncertainty as to how he would behave under the altered circumstances of his lot; and his decision was of such practical importance to each one of them, that they could not but feel some excitement until it was announced.

When he opened the door and re-entered,

all faces were turned upon him with a sort of veiled yet eager scrutiny; of which, however, he did not appear at all conscious.

He sat down beside his mother, and asked after her health. Wulfrie was never demonstrative in any way, but there was a sort of filial tenderness in his manner towards her, that Barbara was not slow to observe. It was as if the eldest son had taken up his position now, as in his father's life time there had been no need to do, as his mother's protector and the mainstay of the house.

Mrs. Meynal seemed dimly aware of something new in his manner. She looked into his face with a sort of helpless appeal, as she said: "I suppose you will stay at home now and take your dear father's place?"

"I will take his duties, at least, if people will allow me that privilege. I fear I shall be but little qualified to fill his place; but I will do my best."

Mrs. Meynal heaved a sigh of relief. Gerald and Celia exchanged glances of satisfaction.

"It will be a capital thing for you, old fellow," said the younger brother, rising leisurely and standing with his back to the fire. "You didn't expect to step into a first-rate practice all ready to hand at your age!"

Gerald did not speak with intentional flippancy or callousness: but his instincts were not fine, and he often shocked the feelings of others without intending to do so.

Wulfric raised his eyes to his brother's face with a glance that said more than any words could have done: and then he laid one hand gently upon his mother's. She had pressed her handkerchief to her eyes, and when she spoke, it was to say, in a plaintive voice, half, choked by emotion: "I don't want anybody to be sacrificed for us. You must choose for yourself, Wulfric."

"I have chosen," answered Wulfric, quietly "for us. I have chosen St. Hilda. It is no sacrifice, mother."

Barbara's pillow was wet with tears that night as she thought of Wulfric's quiet resignation of his cherished hopes and ambition. But she was proud of him, and loved him all the better for his generosity and nobility of nature, and vowed deep down in her heart that whatever she could do to brighten his path and cheer his life should not be lacking to him.

Celia sat a long time over her fire that night; and very much astonished would her younger sister have been could she have read the thoughts passing through her mind.

Celia's nature was idle, inert, vain, and almost frivolous. She made no profession of being anything better, imitated and encouraged Gerald in all his habits of idle extravagance and folly, and had apparently no higher aims in life than he.

And yet, deep down in her heart, undeveloped and dormant, were germs of better things; and to-night these feelings, of whose existence she was as yet hardly aware, had been stirred within her; and as she sat over her fire her calm and usually listless face was more full of thought, and expressed more of longing and purpose than perhaps any one had ever seen there before; for Celia was not wont to disclose her feelings to any one.

"He does not like doing it—he hates the thought of it; but he is going to do it all the same," she said to herself, half aloud. "Gerald will laugh at him and ignore him, and so shall I; and mother will plague him by ceaseless complainings, and Barbara will worry him by defending him when he would much rather be let alone. He will hate the life; and yet he takes it up of his own accord. Why is it? Why do people do what they so much dislike? It is past me to find out; and yet sometimes I wish I did know. After all, what does it matter to me? It is no

affair of mine ; and yet—" Celia roused herself with a sigh, turned and looked at herself in the glass, and uttered a little laugh. "I must not take to thinking," she said. "It does not become me."

In his father's study Wulfric was seated alone, his head resting upon his hand in an attitude of deep thought. Presently he lifted himself up, and stood erect before a portrait of Dr. Meynal that hung over the fire-place. The picture was strikingly like the original, and the eyes seemed to the young man to be looking straight into his own.

"Father," said the young man, aloud, "I will take the trust you have left behind for me. I will fill your place, so help me God, in as much as it is possible for me to do so."

CHAPTER IV.

IN HARNESS.

IT soon became known at St. Hilda that young Dr. Meynal was going to take the practice left by his father; and, on the whole, this arrangement pleased the inhabitants better than any other could have done. It was pleasant to them to think that it was not a total stranger who would prescribe for their varied ailments, that there was not a new name to be learned, that the cherished traditions of the place were not to be rudely over-set. It was true that Wulfric was little known in his native town. He had never cared for the humdrum neighborhood and its quiet surroundings; and from the day he first left home to go to Harrow, he had been very little there, and of late years hardly at all; yet even with all that against him he was still a Meynal, and had been born in the house where now he lived, and there was something comfortable and reassuring in that thought.

And then, when he began to move about amongst them, Wulfric's strong personality began to make itself felt at once, inspiring

different feelings with different natures, but leaving a very general impression that he was a man to be respected and perhaps feared a little, but hardly likely to be very popular.

Dr. Meynal's genial courtesy and visible warmth of heart had made him a great favorite. He had patience inexhaustible, even with those fanciful ailments that can never be cured, and that, if a source of income, are also a source of annoyance to a busy and practical medical man.

Wulfric was more blunt and candid than his father had been, and in some quarters gave huge offence. Indeed, he lost one or two patients at the very outset, and had to bear his mother's reproaches and Gerald's gentle satire with what indifference he might. He said that there was nothing the matter with the people, and he could not spare time for visiting them, and was glad to be rid of them; but Mrs. Meynal quoted his father to him, and silenced him in that way, although he could not be made to confess the error of his ways. "He had been stubborn from a baby," as his mother plaintively remarked.

But if young Dr. Meynal showed himself rough and unsympathetic over nervous ailments that were, in his opinion, the result of idleness of body or vacuity of mind, his care and skill

were undoubted in other cases where the disease was genuine. He was a much more skillful surgeon than his father had ever been, and his proficiency in this department was at once exemplified by some cures that were thought most remarkable, in cases of long-standing helplessness or malformation. He was well versed, too, in all the modern researches of science, as applied both to surgery and medicine, and it very soon began to be recognised in the county that the young doctor lately settled at St. Hilda was a remarkably clever and successful practitioner; and he began to be called in, first in consultation, and later on alone, to many places where his father's name had hardly ever been known.

Of course, all this did not happen just at once, or, indeed, for many months; but Wulfrie was undoubtedly making his way with considerable rapidity. Yet, as is often the case, his family knew less of his success than almost any one else, and he was not likely to enlighten their ignorance.

In point of fact, Wulfrie lived his present life very much alone, and saw little of any one at home except his sister Barbara.

It was Barbara who rose an hour earlier than was the habit of the household to give her brother his breakfast soon after eight;

for he had established the principle of being at the surgery at half-past, to give an hour of his time to poor patients, who could not afford to pay for medical advice. There was no hospital at St. Hilda, and although Dr. Meynal had always been very kind to the poor, he had not always had the time to do for them as much as he was willing; and as Wulfrie well knew the demands of an increasing practice, he had resolved from the first to set apart a regular hour for seeing the poor at his surgery, and had appointed from half-past eight to half-past nine each day as the time when advice was given away to all applicants. As for visiting them at their own houses, that had to be left to the exigencies of the cases, and the pressure of daily duties; but it was very plainly understood by all that young Dr. Meynal was a kind friend to the suffering poor.

Wulfrie never came home to luncheon. The carriage called at the surgery at noon, and took him his daily round, and it was seldom till after the family had dined that the doctor returned from his day's work.

Barbara always gave him his dinner, and chatted to him whilst he ate it. Wulfrie had not appeared at first to care for her presence, and had often hurt her a little by suggest-

ing that she should rejoin the others in the drawing-room, and "not bother about him." But the girl had always declined to leave him, and gradually he had grown used to her ministrations, and would have missed them had they been withdrawn.

"You are spoiling me for bachelor ways," he once said to her, with his rare smile; and Barbara felt amply repaid for all previous apparent coolness. Wulf liked her to be with him, and that was all the reward she wanted.

For Barbara, who had always been inclined to be a bit of a hero-worshipper, if she could only find an object on which to lavish her devotion, was quite inclined to make a hero of her brother; and the more she saw of him, the more did she admire and love him.

Wulfrie, however, was in no wise conscious of being a hero, and was as cool and matter-of-fact as a man could be, accepting his sister's attentions at first in the light of a necessary evil, but growing resigned to them at length, till presently he found them rather pleasant.

After his repast, during which Barbara talked, and he discussed his dinner with business-like zest, the two would retire into the study, where Wulfrie would smoke an "anti-infection pipe," as he called it, and would from time to time regale Barbara with some

scraps of local intelligence, or some anecdote about a patient of a non-professional character. Barbara knew most of the people he visited, at least, by name and reputation; and she liked to hear all the news, and was an eager and willing listener.

Then when a quiet hour had been passed thus—the doctor's one leisure hour of the day—Barbara would be ruthlessly dismissed, and Wulfrie would either take his hat and go out to visit any patient in the neighborhood whom he had been obliged to omit during the day's round; or he would sit down to his books and papers, and study hard until past midnight, when his day's work came to an end.

Mrs. Meynal often plaintively remarked that she hardly ever saw Wulfrie from week's end to week's end, and Gerald shrugged his shoulders, and remarked that his brother was hardly cut out for drawing-rooms, and was more for use than for ornament. Celia said she could not bear him in the room; his voice was so harsh, and his manners so bearish, and that she was very glad he kept himself to himself; and Barbara's eyes used to shine with indignation as she heard these words, and it was all she could do to refrain from a fiery retort. She was learning, however, that her championship did not do her brother's cause much good,

and she contented herself by lavishing upon him a great wealth of love from a very warm heart, whose natural outlets were sadly checked by the unresponsiveness of others.

"Wulf," she said one evening, as brother and sister sat together in the study, "have you seen Mr. Dumaresq yet?"

"Dumaresq?—the man who lives in the big house by the sea? Yes, I saw him once three weeks ago. I told him I should only come when he sent for me. Quiet and fresh air are what he wants mainly, but his constitution is very much undermined."

"Did you see his wife, or his daughter?"

"I saw Mrs. Dumaresq for a few minutes. I don't think she much liked me. What kind of people are they? County magnates?"

"I don't know much about them. They have not been here long. I think the girl looks nice, and she is very pretty; but somehow we don't get to know them. People have not liked to call much since father died."

"I suppose not. They are always asking after you all, though."

Barbara sighed a little.

"Life is very dull sometimes, Wulf. I hate being idle; it is so hard to find anything to do."

Wulfrie smiled, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"I don't suffer much from that evil."

"Ah, no! But then, you are a man."

"Are there no idle men in the world, then?"

Barbara thought of Gerald, and laughed a little. Wulfrie seemed to read her thoughts, and his eyes twinkled.

"Well, but men have plenty of things to do if they like to try; but girls are so hedged in—you don't know."

"Perhaps I don't. It's not a subject I've ever studied closely; but I never can see why a woman's life must of necessity be idle."

"Not altogether idle, perhaps," said Barbara, "but useless. One does things just to pass away the time; but there is no use in them."

Wulfrie mused awhile, his face set in lines of thought.

Barbara watched him closely.

"What are you thinking about, Wulf?" she asked at length, as he did not speak.

"I'm thinking what an odd thing it is that with so much work in the world waiting to be done, and with so much power and energy longing for an outlet, more ways cannot be found for fitting the one to the other."

Barbara was studying his face closely, when he turned upon her the light of his deep-set eyes.

"I could set a score of women to work in

St. Hilda alone, and keep them going for a twelvemonth; but then they would not come, and if they did they would grow tired or disgusted and go away."

Barbara stood up and clasped her hands.

"Could you find some work for me, Wulf?"

"To be sure I could; but I don't say it's work you would like."

But the girl's face was flushed and eager.

"Tell me," she said, breathlessly.

"Don't be excited, Barbara. I assure you there is not the least romance or idealism connected with it. What I want to get hold of, is a woman with some sense and gumption in her, who will go and see after some of my poor patients in their own homes—make inquiries as to their circumstances, and see if they tell the truth to me; look after them a little when they are off the sick list, and yet not quite well, and learn to do a few simple dressings so as to save my time and their steps sometimes. It won't be nice work; it won't, in the majority of cases, be even interesting work; but it will be work that wants doing badly enough, and that nobody I know seems likely to undertake. Now, don't get into a state of mind over it. It's not a thing to be decided in a moment. It wants thinking over. There are many points to be taken into consideration."

Barbara was silent for awhile, not because there was any indecision in her mind; but because Wulf had bid her not to be in a hurry.

"If mother will allow me," she said, presently, "I will come gladly. I should like to work for you and your patients."

Wulfrie smiled slightly and half shook his head.

"Always in a hurry, Barbara; always in a hurry. You must get mother's consent, of course, to start with. Will that be a difficulty?"

"Rather, perhaps; but I think I might get over that, as long as there was no infection in the cases I went to see."

"I should take care of that," answered Wulfrie. "It is more for surgical and chronic cases I should want you, and for private detective work. You would have to come with me to the surgery in the mornings to learn your business and to get to know the people. That would be the first step."

Barbara's eyes sparkled. It was like realising an ideal to be able to help Wulf at his work. She had never even dreamed of anything so much to her liking.

Wulfrie, however, took things coolly, bidding her decide in no hurry, but speak to her mother about it, and get things settled by

degrees. He was not going to have her rush into anything blindfold, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment. Second thoughts were often best, and she must wait for hers.

The next day as he sat at his dinner, Barbara waiting upon him as usual, but refraining from "talking shop" as he phrased it, whilst he ate a note was brought by a mounted messenger from the Cedars to summon Dr. Meynal at once to attend on Mr. Dumaresq who had had a seizure of some kind, and was extremely ill.

Wulfric rose at once, turned the groom out of the saddle and mounted the horse himself, and had galloped up to the Cedars nearly half an hour before its inhabitants had believed it possible he could be there.

He was taken straight up into the room where the sick man lay, and was shut up an hour with him, after which, leaving his patient much relieved, he descended to the study to write a prescription.

Mrs. Dumaresq was favorably impressed by the skill and self-possession of the young doctor; but she had not entirely forgotten her former opinion that he was a man of too opinionated and independent a type.

"For the future, Dr. Meynal," she said, "I must request your regular attendance upon

Mr. Dumaresq. You thought lightly of his condition a few weeks back, but probably you will have changed your opinion to-day. Had you been seeing him constantly, as your father did, most likely this attack might have been averted."

Wulfrie made no reply, but merely bowed as he left the room. He knew that Mrs. Dumaresq's suggestion was based upon a mistake, but he did not choose to dispute the point; and perhaps his silence impressed her with more confidence in him than any defence could have done.

"He is a remarkable young man," she said to herself, "and undoubtedly clever; but I am not sure that I like him."

Wulfrie went down to the study, which room he knew, having held there his last interview with the master of the house. He opened the door and then stood still suddenly, for the room was not tenantless, as he had expected.

Reinée was kneeling on the floor, picking up some flowers that had been scattered upon the carpet, most likely when Mr. Dumaresq had fallen from his chair in the way that had been described. The girl's face was pale, and her delicate lips trembled, her white evening dress was creased and tumbled, and she looked like one who had been through an ordeal and was a good deal shaken by it.

As Wulfrie entered, she looked up quickly and rose to her feet. She had never met him before, but his face and figure were familiar to her, as they were by this time to all the inhabitants of St. Hilda.

"Oh, Dr. Meynal," she said, advancing a few steps towards him, "please tell me what you think of my father."

Wulfrie looked into the sweet, pleading face, and the trustful, dark eyes fixed so earnestly upon him, and the rather hard lines of his brow and lips relaxed a little as he answered gently: "There is nothing seriously wrong with your father, Miss Dumaresq. There is nothing in this attack to alarm you. It was more from weakness than any other cause, and rest and care will soon bring him round again to his normal state."

Reinée smiled tremulously; but there was still a sort of wistful trouble in her eyes.

"I am afraid his normal state, as you call it, is not very satisfactory, Dr. Meynal?"

"Not very, perhaps; but we must mend that, if we can."

"Do you think you can?"

"I think I can do something; and I am sure you can do more."

Reinée smiled through the tears that sparkled on her long, black lashes.

"What can I do?"—

"Take him out of himself. Talk to him, read to him, sing to him; get him to walk or ride with you, and to take an interest in the garden and potter about there a little. I can write prescriptions and give dry lectures on diet and habit; but it is to you I must look for the lion's share of the work, and you shall have the credit of the cure when it comes."

And then Wulfrie held open the door for her to pass out, and they exchanged friendly little bows, as if some chord of mutual sympathy and understanding had been struck between them. Wulfrie sat down to write his prescription, whilst Reinée went slowly upstairs, saying to herself: "That is Barbara's brother, I think they are rather alike. He is not nearly as ugly as mamma said. I call it rather a fine face."

The next day Reinée had a call from Barbara herself. The girl had come to inquire after Mr. Dumaresq, and as the patient was asleep and his wife was with him, it was Reinée who came down to receive the guest.

This arrangement just suited the two girls, who had felt mutually drawn towards one another from the first.

"I saw your brother yesterday," said Reinée. "He spoke so kindly about papa. Somehow

his face made me fancy he would be rather severe. Did he tell you what he really thought of him?"

"Wulf does not talk about his patients to me, you know," said Barbara, with a little smile; "but I do not think he considers Mr. Dumaresq to be very ill. I know he thinks a quiet, country life the very best thing for him."

"I am so glad we have come here," said Reinée, with her frank smile. "It is all so sweet and lovely. I am sure every one must be happy here. Didn't you think so?"

"I don't know whether it is the place that makes people happy," answered Barbara, slowly; "I think it is the life we lead."

"Yes, yes!" answered Reinée, with quick sympathy. "I know that, too. Only—don't you think?—it is easier to lead the right kind of life in a place like this, rather than in London?"

"I never lived in London," answered Barbara; "and—and I don't quite know what you mean by a 'right kind of life.'"

The two girls looked at each other; perhaps they wondered why they spoke so openly at so early a stage in their acquaintance.

"Shall we come into the garden?" said Reinée. "Should you like it? I am so fond of the garden. I never had one before."

Barbara acquiesced willingly. The spring sunshine was bright and hot and exhilarating. It seemed easier to talk in the breezy garden with flowers around them, and the sea flashing far below, than it had done in the dim, cool drawing-room.

Reinée showed her garden with the pride and pleasure of one who thoroughly loves it. Barbara sympathised with her; and over the subject of flowers and shrubs, and the laying out of the grounds, the two girls waxed intimate. But perhaps they were thinking all the time of other matters, too, for presently, as they were pacing a quiet shrubby path together, Reinée said, suddenly: "I think what I mean by a right kind of life, is a life that is led not just for personal enjoyment, but that tries to bring happiness to other people as well."

"Or to do them good," added Barbara.

"Yes; that would make them happier, would it not?"

"I don't know," answered Barbara. "I don't think I have ever thought much about happiness. It is nice to be happy; but we can get on very well without."

Reinée looked a little wistful.

"I have always had such a happy life," she said. "Perhaps that is why I feel so sad

when I think of all the poor people who hardly know what happiness means. I do so long to do something for them."

"So do I," answered Barbara. "I have wanted it ever since I have had no lessons to do, and have had so much more time on my hands. I don't think I have cared so much about making them happy; but I should like to help them to be more thrifty, more clean, more orderly and healthy. I don't know, of course, if I shall be able to do much; but I think perhaps something may be done."

"Will you be able to do it?" asked Reinée, eagerly.

"I hope so—now."

"Why do you say 'now?'"

"Because my brother Wulfrie wants me to help him a little in looking after some of his poor patients, and I think mother will let me, though she has not quite decided yet. Wulfrie says it will not be nice work, and that there will be nothing pleasant or interesting in it. He does not try to paint it in fine colors at all: but, oh, I am so tired of being idle and useless! I have so longed for some kind of work. I shall not mind what it is, so long as I feel I am doing something for other people."

Reinée's eyes were shining with sympathy.

"Oh, Barbara," she cried, with sudden eagerness, "I know so well what you mean!" Then she colored a little, and said, frankly and sweetly, "I ought not to have been so familiar; but somehow I always think of you as 'Barbara.'"

"Please go on calling me so," answered the girl, with an answering smile. "I like it much better."

"Then you must call me Reinée, and then we shall feel like being friends. I hope you will like your work, and be very happy."

"I shall be very busy, at any rate," answered Barbara, smiling, "and that is what I seem to care most about."

"Who was that walking with you Reinée?" asked Mrs. Dumaresq, later in the day.

"Barbara Meynal. She is such a nice girl!"

"You looked as if you were swearing an eternal friendship, or something of that sort."

"I think we shall be friends always."

Mrs. Dumaresq smiled indulgently.

"Always is a long day, my dear; and I do not think your stay at St. Hilda will be long enough for the formation of very lasting ties. You will hardly be allowed to bury yourself here for very many months."

Reinée's face grew suddenly grave; but she made no reply to this remark.

CHAPTER V.

BARBARA'S WORK.

"WULF," said Barbara, about a week later, as she sat with her brother in his study at night, "I have spoken to mother about what we were talking of, and she has given me leave to please myself in the matter. She did not like it much at first, but I do not think she minds it now—she soon forgets her objections to things—and I mean to take advantage of her permission. I will begin any time you like, the sooner the better."

"Very good," answered Wulfrie, equably. "You are sure your mind is made up?"

"Quite sure."

"Because I would much rather you should never begin at all than should begin only to get tired and throw it all up at the end of a few weeks or months."

Barbara's face looked almost as resolute as Wulfrie's own.

"I shall not do that, Wulf; I am not given to changing my mind."

"Very good," he said quietly; "you can begin to-morrow morning if you like."

A gleam of pleasure crossed Barbara's bright face, but she did not express any great satisfaction. She began to understand her brother, and to learn a certain reticence in his presence.

Wulf remained silent for a time, and then he asked a totally unexpected question.

"Barbara, do you read your Bible?"

Barbara was so astonished at this irrelevant query, that she hardly knew how to answer it.

"Y-yes," she answered, after a little pause; "I read it most days, more or less;" and then her natural candor triumphing over any other feeling, she added, "I do read it, but I don't think I care much about reading; I don't believe I read except with my eyes. I do it as a sort of respectable duty, you know, not because I care about it really in my heart."

"Ah!" said Wulfrie, and relapsed into silence.

Barbara looked anxiously at him; but his face was quite impenetrable.

"Wulf," she said, presently, "why did you ask me that?"

He was gazing straight before him, his deep set eyes fixed upon the globe of the reading-lamp upon the table.

"Because life is full of hard problems, Barbara, and you will soon be confronted by

some of them when you begin to see a little of the battle of life."

The girl still looked earnestly at him.

"But—but what has that got to do with reading the Bible, Wulf?"

"Ah, what?" he answered, after a pause. "Perhaps you will some day be able to answer your own question, Barbara."

There was a silence, and then Barbara spoke with a certain amount of hesitation.

"I wish you would tell me, Wulf."

"Well," he answered, slowly, "it's just this. Life's problems are hard enough in any case; but the Bible just keeps them from being absolutely insoluble."

Barbara's face was full of intelligence; but she did not look as if she comprehended her brother's meaning altogether.

"I am not sure that I understand you."

"Very likely not. I should not have understood at your age."

Barbara smiled a little.

"You are not so very much older."

"No; but I have seen much more of life."

Barbara assented, and looking into her brother's face she remarked, tentatively, "I did not know you were religious, Wulf."

"Nor I," he answered, with his enigmatic smile. "Now run away; I want to work."

"But I may come to the surgery with you to-morrow?"

"Yes; I said so before, didn't I? I wonder how long you will be as keen on it as you are now."

Yet he smiled as he bent his head to receive her good-night kiss, and Barbara fancied that he was pleased to think she was going to work for him.

She did not go back to the drawing-room direct, but straight up to her own room; and there she took up, with feelings almost akin to curiosity, the Bible that lay amongst the books on her table.

Barbara's Bible was not an altogether neglected book. She read a little in it most days—every day, in fact, unless she was hurried, or her mind was too much pre-occupied. Yet as she opened it now she felt as though she knew very little of its contents. She was not at home among those closely-printed pages. She turned the leaves but felt no satisfaction in the task. Wulf's words were sounding in her ears, but she did not understand them, and the book in her hands seemed to give no clue to the question in her mind.

Presently she closed the book with a sigh, and laid it down in its old place.

"It's no good pretending things," she said,

half aloud. "I never could understand the Bible, or see all the things in it that some people do, and I suppose I never shall. I wonder what Wulf meant by what he said. I never should have expected him to talk like that. Men generally don't care about such things, at any rate till they grow older. I don't believe Gerald ever thinks a bit seriously about anything. But Wulf is different, of course. He is very interesting, I think. I am so glad he is going to let me help him."

And then Barbara went down and joined the others in the drawing-room.

"Mother," she said, as she seated herself amongst them, "I am going to begin helping Wulf to-morrow. I am going to the surgery with him after breakfast."

"Very well, Barbara," said Mrs. Meynal, with the sigh of mournful resignation that was growing habitual now. "A wilful woman must have her way; but I don't suppose you will care for it long."

"We shall see," answered Barbara, cheerfully. "Perhaps I shall like it."

Celia shrugged her white shoulders and looked slightly disdainful and disgusted.

"I can't think how you can dream of doing such horrid, disagreeable work, Barbara. Poor people are bad enough at any time;

but when they are ill they are ten times worse. I really wonder mother lets you go."

Barbara flushed a little, but said nothing, and Mrs. Meynal responded, plaintively, "I never did like it: but I suppose Barbara must go her own way. She is old enough to know her own mind."

"Certainly, certainly," said Gerald, looking up from his paper with his lazy, quizzical smile. *Chacun à son goût*—it's an excellent motto that, and if Bab's taste is for dirty paupers, more or less diseased, by all means let her gratify it. That sort of ministering angel craze is, I believe, very speedily cured by indulgence. It would be a thousand pities to stand in her way at the outset. Later on, perhaps, she may thank us for putting a few reasonable objections in her way."

Gerald's idle mockery always tried Barbara's temper somewhat severely: but she was learning to govern herself, and in this case she refrained from a retort, and merely smiled with a little covert sarcasm.

But Gerald was not disposed to let her alone.

"How long do you give yourself for the new craze to last, Bab? Six weeks, or six months, or what?"

She looked at him with a sparkle in her

eye that was something between resentment and amusement.

"I don't know that I have studied the subject. Judging by the time your great ideas take to come to nothing, I should say six weeks would be quite long enough. I don't think you have ever stuck to any one thing longer than that: but then we may not be cut on the same pattern altogether."

Gerald crossed his arms behind his head and appeared to consider the matter.

"Possibly not, Barbara. I incline on the whole to think not. You and Wulf seem more of a match, and Celia and I—the useful and the ornamental, you see. By-the-bye, do you think any power on earth could induce Wulf to dress himself respectably? I'm really half ashamed to own him when we chance to knock up against one another in the streets of St. Hilda."

Barbara's lip curled.

"I don't think any power will induce him to be a dandy like you, or to waste ever so much money upon his clothes; but I don't see anything the matter with him. I think his way of dressing just suits him. It is manly and unassuming, and he is always clean and tidy, which is more than can be said for you when you are daubing in your

studio. I believe you smudge your velveteen coat on purpose to give yourself a professional air."

Gerald laughed a little as he fingered his moustache.

"All right, Barbara; Wulf is evidently the rising hero, and everything he does is right. Stick to your colors by all manner of means; but don't pretend to tell me that a woman ever knows anything about a man's clothes, because she doesn't. Wulf always did look like a respectable scarecrow, and I imagine he always will, unless, by any chance, he should fall in love. That might do him good, perhaps."

Celia laughed rather scornfully.

"I don't think falling in love is much in Wulf's line, and I don't think he would make a very successful lover, even if it were."

Barbara looked indignant, but made no reply, as Wulfrie himself entered the room at that moment for the short talk with his mother for which he always spared time before she retired.

She was full of charges to him now not to let Barbara run into any danger, or overwork herself in any way; and the young man promised to use his discretion and to take good care of her.

The next morning, after their early breakfast, brother and sister started off together, Barbara in great spirits at the thought of making herself at last of some use in the world; Wulfrie, as usual, silent and rather absorbed, but rousing himself at times to talk to his companion, and tell her a little of her future work.

"What I shall want you to do chiefly, Barbara, so far as I can see, is to look a little bit after the people in the village of St. Hilda down by the sea, which is quite out of my beat, and which it is hard sometimes to make time to visit. When you have got a little experience you can be very useful to me there, looking a little after the out-patients and saving my time in the surgery, and letting me know if there are any cases I ought to visit. The people's own account of things is so hopelessly vague and involved, one never knows what to believe."

Barbara listened eagerly; but the arrival at the surgery hindered further talk. The surgery was a good half-mile from the house and well in the town. There were several patients waiting already for the doctor, and the assistant was making up medicines behind the counter.

Barbara followed her brother into the inner

room, and the patients were admitted one by one. There were some wounds and bruises and burns to be dressed; some lungs to be sounded, and miscellaneous ailments prescribed for, and Barbara was most attentive and thought it all very interesting. She helped her brother as far as she could with the dressings, watched him bandage, and resolved to practise at home, and listened to his brief but clear instructions both to her and to his patients with the greatest attention.

Last of all, a tall, pale-faced man came in rather hurriedly, and with a look of agitation on his face.

"Why, Stone," said the doctor, turning towards him, "you're not on the sick list again, I hope?"

"No, sir, thank you. You've set me on my legs for good, I think, and thankful I am to you for it; but it's my little lad I've come to you about. He was missing this morning, and at last we found him lying on the rocks with his leg badly broke, and a job we had to get him home, poor little chap. He'd been out trying to get seagulls' eggs to sell, times just now being rather hard and as he didn't understand the job, this is what came of it."

"Is the limb set yet?" asked Wulfrie, quickly.

"No, sir, that's just what I came to speak about. I'm 'most ashamed to come, sir, for I know we ought to have the parish doctor, not being in a position to pay a proper fee; but the fact is, you was so good to me and my wife, and they do say as there is no doctor round as can set bones like you; and my wife she urged me to it, and so I made bold——"

"All right, Stone," said Wulfrie, briefly. He was already overhauling one of his deep drawers in the press, and extracting thence splints and bandages and a variety of things. "I'll come across at once, before any more patients come. Just order a trap of some kind from the stables opposite. I haven't a great deal of time to spare."

The man obeyed with alacrity, and Wulfrie sorted out his things rapidly, saying to Barbara as he did so—"Do you care to come?"

"I think I should like to."

"All right. I generally have a spare half hour between the poor and the pay patients, and these last must wait now till I come back. Broken limbs ought to have the precedence."

Wulfrie left word with the assistant as to his whereabouts, and the time he expected to be absent, and then he and his sister and the man Stone drove quickly away together in the cab from the hotel.

Barbara felt as if life had really begun for her in earnest, and when the conveyance stopped at the top of a rough cliff path and they had to descend to the cottage on foot, it seemed to her as if a new phase of existence were opening out before her.

She knew the path well, and had often traversed it, and she knew a clean, bright-looking little cottage, about half way down, which had often changed its inhabitants of late years.

The present tenants she did not know, but evidently the man Stone was the occupier of the little abode into which he now led the way, followed by the doctor and his sister.

The cottage was spotlessly clean and neat, and the tiny outer room was empty, but the sound of faint moans was heard from the little inner chamber, and Stone led the way into the cottage sleeping-room that was rather larger than the parlor.

On the bed in a dark corner lay a little boy about ten years old. His face was white and contracted with pain, and a handkerchief stained with blood was bound round his head. He seemed hardly conscious, and took no notice of the entrance of the strangers. His mother was sitting beside him, and moistening his dry lips with a little milk and water.

Wulfrie approached the child and made a

careful examination of the broken limb. The boy cried out a little when it was touched, but the doctor spoke to him kindly and encouragingly, and something in the deep voice seemed to arrest the little fellow's attention and give him confidence. He bore the setting of the limb with great fortitude, and his pale face flushed with pleasure as Wulfrie laid his hand upon his hot head when all was over and called him a "brave little chap."

Barbara seemed to see Wulfrie in a new light to-day. In spite of his cool, matter-of-fact manner, she could see a depth of quiet, manly tenderness beneath, that she had never suspected before. How she detected this she could not well have told, for Wulfrie's old reserve was never laid aside. But see it she undoubtedly did, and so did the poor who came to him with such confidence in their perplexity and distress.

Little Jack Stone evidently had confidence in his doctor. When the wound on his temple was dressed, and he could lie down comfortably again, he heaved a sigh of satisfaction, and took hold of the strong hand that had tended him so gently and skilfully. He had been roused by what had passed from the stunned state in which he had been found, and had recovered the use of his mental faculties.

"I say," he remarked, faintly but distinctly, "You're a good one, you are—a real first-rater!"

Wulfrie smiled at his candid little patient.

"Well, and you're a plucky little chap too—so there's a pair of us, you see."

Little Jack grinned wide at being bracketed with the great doctor of the place.

"I say," he began again, "how soon can I get up?"

"Not for a good many weeks, old fellow. It's dull to think of, but the time will soon pass. Well, I must be off. I'll come again soon, and see if you're going on all right."

Jack was so visibly reluctant to let his new friend go, that Barbara made a sign to him and remained behind herself. Jack had not noticed her much before, but when Wulf's tall figure had disappeared, he glanced round at the strange young lady, and pulled his fore-lock.

Barbara felt a little shy, but she knew it would be absurd to show it.

"Do you know who I am, Jack?" she asked.

"In course I do—you're his sister. You're Miss Barbara, you are."

"Quite right. You know more about me than I do about you; however, I must make up for lost time. Have you been living here long?"

"'Bout two years now, I think. I don't quite know—it's been two winters, anyhow. I don't like winter. I should like it always to be summer."

"Well, summer is coming now very fast."

"Yes, but it won't be much good to me if I've got to lie here ever so many weeks." And Jack's face looked very rueful.

Barbara hardly knew what consolation to offer.

"Do you like books to read, Jack?"

"I ain't much of a scholar, ma'am, thankee. I can read, but not to take it all in like. It ain't much fun to read like that."

Barbara did not know what else to suggest, and she fancied the boy began to look a little flushed and excited.

"Does your leg hurt you, Jack?"

"Not so much as it did; but it aches a good bit, and my head, too."

"I think you ought to keep quiet. Would you like some jelly by-and-bye?"

Jack's eyes expressed his pleasure.

"Yes, please, ma'am."

"Very well, I will see that you have some. And shall I come to see you again?"

"Yes, please, ma'am, if it ain't a-troubling you too much."

And Barbara went away, feeling that a sort

of beginning had been made, though not very confident as to her own success at starting. Still, to have made the start was something, more was sure to follow.

. It was not from her own family that Barbara was to receive sympathy and encouragement in her work. Even Wulfrie was too silent and reserved to be much of a confidant, but in Reinée Dumaresq Barbara found a warm friend and ally.

She came to see her soon after her work had commenced, and was eager to know how she had fared and what it was like. Her fresh, eager interest and quick sympathy did much to win Barbara's heart, and when she pleaded so earnestly to "hear all about it—every detail," it seemed like having a dear sister to talk to—a luxury of which unfortunately the girl knew in reality as little as did Reinée herself.

"It is not so very much I can do," answered Barbara, modestly. "I go every day with Wulfrie to the surgery in the town, and help him as much as I can with the poor patients who come. I have learned to bandage and do a few simple dressings, and some of the cases belong to me, and I do them alone, unless I want any help. Then I go and inquire about some of the people to see

if they are in as great need as they profess, or if they want things that they will not ask for, which does happen pretty often with the more respectable ones. I go and see some of the people who cannot get up, and if they seem very bad I tell Wulf, and he goes himself. Of course, at first, I can't help him much, because I haven't experience, but he says that if I stick to it, and do not get tired, I shall be very useful to him in time."

"And you will not get tired, will you?" asked Reinée, earnestly.

"Oh, no, I feel sure I shan't. I don't like to boast, but I feel certain about it. I like it more and more as I get used to the people and their ways, and more certain of myself. I don't feel as though I could ever give up. More likely I shall have too much to do and shall want an assistant," and Barbara laughed.

Reinée's face flushed a little.

"Your sister?"—she began, half timidly; but Barbara laughed again.

"Celia? Ah, no! that sort of thing is not at all in her line. She would be horrified at the bare idea. She is almost disgusted with me as it is."

For a moment Reinée seemed embarrassed: then looking up she asked, "Barbara, do you think I could help if I were to try?"

“You!”

Barbara was so astonished that she spoke this monosyllable in her abruptest fashion.

“I am afraid I should be very little use,” answered Reinée, humbly. “I know I have no experience, and I am not clever or managing like some people; but I should so like to do something towards making other people happier, if only I knew how to set about it. I do not feel able to work quite alone. I should not know how to set about it, and I should make such blunders. I might talk to the clergyman, but that seems so formal, I feel half afraid to begin to him about things. But if you would tell me about one or two poor families who are pretty respectable, so that mamma would let me go, and who would be glad to be visited and helped when they needed it, I should like that better than anything; and if there were sick children, I should love to go and see them and try to cheer them up—poor little darlings. I do love children, and I think they generally take to me. Do you think, Barbara, you could find me anything like that to do, not in the town exactly; mamma would not like my going alone to the town, but somewhere in the village of St. Hilda? I believe she will allow me to do that.”

"I'm sure I can," answered Barbara, quickly. "I've got one nice little fellow on the cliff, laid up with a broken leg, who would be delighted with a visit from you. I shall be sure to have others soon. Are you sure you mean it, Reinée? You seem so—so——"

"So what?" asked Reinée, smiling.

"I hardly know how to express it—I was going to say so aristocratic, to go into poor people's cottages," and Barbara laughed a little and grew rather red.

"The Queen visits the poor people in the Highlands," answered Reinée, laughing in turn. "I do not think I need be too grand to do what she does. But I must get definite permission first—I think I can."

"Well, I will undertake to keep you supplied with people," answered Barbara, "for I can see already how fast my work is increasing. It will soon be quite a relief to have somebody else to turn the cases over to when I am hard pressed."

She spoke with an almost professional air and Reinée was duly impressed by it.

"Do you think your brother will mind?" she asked, after a pause.

"Wulf? Oh, no, he will not mind. I dare say he will think you will soon give it up; but that remains to be proved."

"Yes," answered Reinée, thoughtfully. "Of course, we may go away from this place, or something might happen to stand in my way; but I do not think I shall get tired myself. Barbara, what do you do about talking to the people when they are ill, and reading to them? Do they not want to know a great many things?"

"What sort of things do you mean?" asked Barbara, her face flushing a little.

"I mean about religion," answered Reinée, simply. "You know, if they are ill they are sure to think about such things, and if they should be likely to die they will want to be told about God and heaven. What do you do then? What should I have to do? I am afraid I should be rather at a loss."

"I don't think people are so anxious to be taught as you seem to think," answered Barbara; "I have not found them at all concerned about anything beyond their bodily wants."

Reinée looked half wistfully at Barbara and then dropped her eyes and sighed a little sigh, but she said no more upon the subject, and only the question of bodily needs was afterwards discussed between them.

CHAPTER VI.

DAY DREAMS.

"I THINK you will find Juliet in the garden, my dear," said Mrs. Granby. "She is often there with her books now that the weather has turned so much warmer."

Reinée Dumaresq was standing before the old lady, looking down at her with her peculiarly sweet smile.

"Mrs. Granby," she said, with the winning frankness that was one of her most engaging traits, "I sometimes wonder why it is you always look so very happy. I think you are the happiest person I know."

The old lady smiled a little, in that peculiar inward fashion not uncommon in old people, and said: "I am happy, my dear. I have had my troubles in my time; but the clouds have all rolled away now."

Reinée looked dreamily out of the window.

"I think you must have a secret for making them roll away."

"Perhaps I have."

"I wish you would tell it to me."

Mrs. Granby looked up into the thoughtful

face above her, with its soft curves and steady dark eyes, and wondered if there were any clouds hanging over this young life that seemed so sheltered and cared for.

"Some secrets can only be learned by experience, my dear," answered the old lady, smiling a little to herself. "If you wish to learn the secret of happiness, you must learn that of contentment first."

Reinée made no reply at once, but after a thoughtful pause, she said, slowly: "There is so much to learn in life;" and then she moved quietly across the room and went to look for Juliet in the garden.

She had not to seek far. Juliet was in her favorite sheltered arbor overlooking the sea. She had books beside her, but she was not reading, being lost in a reverie from which she did not awake until Reinée actually spoke, turning the books over as she did so.

"Ruskin, Browning, Carlyle; I always feel a sad dunce when I come to see you, Juliet. I have had so little time for study since I left the schoolroom, and I am afraid I did not learn much there."

"Ah," answered Juliet, drawing a long breath, "if only I had not had time!"

"What do you mean, Juliet?"

"Mean? I mean that I have never known

any world but the world of books; never lived any real life, save in the pages of history or romance. Whilst you have been seeing real life and mixing in the stirring turmoil, I have been stifling in the heavy atmosphere of this stagnant little place, where people do not live but vegetate. Ah, you do not know what it is like, year after year! You have lived in the world—you are to be envied!"

Reinée was growing used to Juliet's impetuosity, and knew something of her views of life by this time.

"I am not sure that living in the world, as you call it, is so very different from your life. We have our own circle of friends—rather larger, of course, in London than here—but sometimes I think people are very much alike everywhere."

But Juliet shook her head impatiently.

"You don't understand—of course you don't! How could you? What would not I give for one year of the life you have led!"

Reinée laughed softly.

"I wish I could give it you. I did not care for it so very much. I feel quite pleased to think we are settled down now to be quiet and enjoy our own home life. I mean to be very rustic and Arcadian."

Juliet looked at her in surprise, not unmingled with a faint dissatisfaction.

"I cannot understand how you can talk so—how you can be content to give it all up so quietly. I often feel as if this little place would choke me, though I have never known anything else. But for you who have really tasted life to give up all so calmly—it passes my comprehension. Have you no dreams, no aspirations?"

Reinée's face grew intent and thoughtful.

"Yes, I think I have. But what has that to do with the question?"

"Why, everything! One can do nothing here but dream. There is no realising of one's ideals."

Reinée smiled a little.

"I think mine will be more easily realised here than in the places I have been more used to."

Juliet looked at her curiously.

"I can't understand that. There seems to me nothing to be done here. I wish you would tell me what you mean, Reinée."

Reinée's eyes had grown dreamy again as they had done when she was talking to Mrs. Granby just before. A slight smile parted her lips and her face looked very sweet in its bright, trustful thoughtfulness.

"It is so difficult to put things into words, Juliet. I do not think I shall ever make you understand; but I have a great many thoughts and feelings of my own. I have always seemed to live before in a hurry and whirl, with no time to think, or to study, or to try to live my life more in earnest. I have no sister, and my mother always wished to take me everywhere with her, and it seemed my duty to put aside everything else to do as she wished."

"Ah," said Juliet, with a sigh, "how I should have loved such a life!"

"Perhaps you would have grown a little tired of it," said Reinée, quietly, "as I did."

Juliet shook her head.

"No, I am sure I never should have done that: but you have not told me about your ideal yet."

"It is so hard to say it in words," answered Reinée, simply. "I think it is that I want to be good."

Juliet stared and then laughed a little.

"Do you think it is easier to be good in the country than in London?"

"It seems so to me," answered Reinée, in the same simple way. "At least, one has much more time to think and much fewer temptations. I have always wanted to do

something for other people—something to make unhappy lives happier and rough paths more smooth. In London I never could do anything like that; nothing personal, I mean: only giving away money when I was asked—mamma would not have liked me to do more, and in a great city things seem so big and one feels helpless. But here it is different. There are not so many people; I feel as if I could make friends with them and make them happy. I should like to visit them in their homes, and take them little things that I had made myself; I should like to talk to the little children and make them love me. Perhaps I might have a Sunday school class, or a little class of my own at home. I should like the people to tell me of their troubles, and try to help them when I could. I should like them to feel that they had a friend to come to when they wanted help. I should like to make myself good first and try to help them to be good afterwards."

Reinée spoke with all the frank simplicity of her nature. Juliet listened in some wonder. She could not have spoken out so clearly and composedly. She would have felt ashamed of such homely and rustic ambitions.

"Well," she answered at length, summing

up the case with a readiness for which Reinée was not quite prepared, "your ideal seems to be to play at Arcadia, and make a model Lady Bountiful for a model village. I suppose everybody fresh from London thinks the country all romance and the people all delightful."

Reinée colored a little, but she was not vexed. It was very much what her mother had said before. In her heart the girl knew that she had deeper thoughts and purposes; but she could not make them clear to another.

"You think me very romantic and foolish, I suppose?"

"No, only ignorant. You fancy that poor people here are quite different from those in town, less dirty, less wicked, less miserable. You think that you can do good here that you could not there, that it will all be easy and pleasant; but you will not find it so really. Things will be just as disagreeable and discouraging here as there, and after a brief experience of country cottages you will retire gracefully from the field as others have done before you."

Reinée looked rather downcast.

"Does nobody go amongst them, then?"

"Oh, yes, the clergy, the doctors, of course. Barbara Meynal has just begun some sort of sick visiting."

"Barbara Meynal—yes; she was telling me about it. I should like to help her, if my mother will consent. I have told her so."

"Yes, she is helping her brother Wulfrie. She has been at it about three weeks now and seems to find it all very delightful; but Barbara always was impulsive; she will most likely grow tired by and by. As for you—I am certain you will tire of it directly, if you begin."

"Why?"

"Oh, you know people always do. There is something so miserably wearisome in the daily round of a little place like this."

Reinée did not look as if she quite understood the logic of this, but all she said was: "Tell me about your ideals, Juliet, now that I have told you of mine."

"Mine?" responded Juliet, half bitterly, "ah, it is waste of breath to talk of mine—hemmed in as I am in this narrow little place. I want to go out into the great whirl of life that lies beyond; to feel myself drawn into the vortex, to do and dare great things for the struggling humanity there. I feel I could do something—it may sound vain to say it, but I feel that I could if I only had the chance, but doomed to this quiet monotonous life I can do nothing—nothing."

"Except take care of your old grandmother," answered Reinée, with a grave smile.

"She does not need any care of mine," answered Juliet, with some vehemence. "She is well and strong and active; her life is full of little interests that give her all she seems to need. Her dairy, her fowls, her garden and household suffice her, and she does not really need me, although she has given me a home ever since I was left an orphan at six years old. She is good and kind in her own way, but she does not understand me and she never will. She forgets that she is old whilst I am young, and that what is enough for her energies is miserable inactivity for me. She smiles when I try to talk to her, and I know that she thinks me an idle dreamer, quite ignorant of what I speak about. But if I could only get away and find a larger sphere of action I would soon show her what I could do. I know it is not all mere boasting. If I could but get to London, what could I not do?"

Reinée looked thoughtful and made no reply. She was wondering if Juliet knew at all what she was speaking of.

"If I were rich and beautiful like you," pursued the other, still excited and restless, "I might realise my ideal still. Possibly I might

marry and free myself in that way." She paused and looked at her companion, and then added, more slowly, "I almost wonder that you have not married, Reinée. Do you mind my asking if you are engaged?"

Reinée's color had risen a little, but she answered, quietly and steadily, "No, I am not engaged."

Something in her manner aroused Juliet's curiosity.

"I suppose it would be very impertinent to ask if you cared much for anybody?"

Reinée smiled frankly and sweetly.

"Perhaps it would, if I did; but I do not care for anybody in the way you mean. My brother Clive has always stood first with me, and sometimes I think he always will."

"You have a brother, then?"

"Oh, yes, my dear boy, Clive. He is three years older than I am, and I love him with all my heart. He has been yachting; but is coming home very soon now. I shall be so glad to see him!"

Reinée's whole face beamed as she spoke. Her brother was evidently very dear to her.

Juliet would have asked more about him, but Mrs. Granby appeared making her way towards them, and a maid followed with a tray laden with strawberries and cream.

"Mrs. Granby," said Reinée, when they had all seated themselves again and the maid had withdrawn, "Juliet and I have been telling each other our day dreams and ideals of life. We don't think at all alike, and one thing seems to me to be funny. Juliet, who has always lived here, thinks and feels that she could do more and make more of her life if only she could go to London; and I, who have spent much of my time there, feel as if the country were the place where I could do the most to realise my ideals of usefulness. Why is it that we feel so differently? Can you guess? I am sure you are very wise and understand things much better than we do."

Juliet was rather taken aback by hearing Reinée propound her questions so simply. She was not fond of confiding in her grandmother, but she could not help herself now. Mrs. Granby smiled kindly at the two girls.

"My dears," she said, in her wise and gentle fashion, "it is a way we all have in our lives of thinking we could better ourselves and do more good by breaking away from old ties and striking out a new line for ourselves. What we know by daily experience looks tame and wearisome to us, and imagination paints the unknown in glowing colors;

but experience teaches us that the colors fade on approach, and the old difficulties we hoped to escape beset us at every turn. God has sent us each into the world with our appointed work to do, and if we leave matters in his hands and look to him for grace and guidance, he will show us the way to do it. Let our prayer always be, 'Lord, show me what thou wouldst have me to do, and help me to do it to thy glory.' If we say that from our hearts, not once nor twice, but every day of our lives, we may be quite sure we shall not ask in vain, and wherever we are—in a peaceful country village, or in the whirl of London life, work will never be wanting us, and our heavenly Father will help us to do it. That is the ideal that I would have each young girl aspire to. It sounds homely: perhaps it sounds both visionary and tame; but try the prescription and see how it answers."

Reinée's face wore a very softened look. She glanced at the old lady, and it seemed as if something like a tear sparkled in her eyes. What had been said appealed to the devotional element of her nature, which was very strong, and she almost wished Juliet had not been present, for her dark face checked any possibility of confidential talk.

"I should like to feel like that," she said,

softly; "but I am afraid I am very ignorant. I hardly know how to begin to try to be good. It is so much easier to dream than to plan and to do."

Mrs. Granby smiled quietly, and quoted Kingsley's lines—

"Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever,
Do noble deeds, not dream them all day long;
So, making life, death, and that vast forever
One grand, sweet song."

"I should like to do that," said Reinée.

"Those who wish to do so generally can find the way," was the quiet answer.

But Juliet's face was hard and rather scornful. She had heard counsel like this before, and it was to her as idle words, without any real meaning. It was all very well to talk, but nothing could be done on such lines as these. She had been convinced of this by practical experience, as she told herself again and again.

Reinée, however, thought rather differently. She was moved and struck by what Mrs. Granby had said, and went home with a more deeply-rooted purpose than before of trying to turn to account her bright, young life for the benefit of others as well as for her own enjoyment. That night she spoke again to her

mother about her former request, and received a half mocking, half serious assent to her petition.

"Well, well, my love, I see no valid reason against your doing a little if you have set your mind upon it; but you must be careful where you go, and I do not think you will care for it long. Clive will soon be home, and I quite expect he will bring Arthur with him, and then you will not have much time for your charitable works. You will be better occupied."

Reinée's fair face flushed a little.

"Clive never interferes with my pleasures. He is more likely to help than to hinder."

Mrs Dumaresq laughed lightly.

"Possibly, my love. But what about Arthur?"

The flush on Reinée's face deepened, but eyes and voice did not falter.

"Arthur has nothing to do with it," she answered, quietly and steadily.

Mrs Dumaresq laughed again, and Reinée was silent for a few minutes, trying to command herself before she trusted herself to continue the conversation.

CHAPTER VII.

GERALD'S VIEWS OF LIFE.

"WULF," said Gerald, in a slightly patronizing tone of voice, "when can you spare an evening to dine with me at the Thompsons? They want to make your acquaintance."

"Very kind of them, I'm sure; but I haven't time to begin dining out."

"Oh, nonsense! You can't go and make an anchorite of yourself. Our father never did, and it's absurd for you to take that line. Besides, people will resent it, and professional men like you and me cannot afford to give ourselves airs and despise public opinion."

A faint suspicion of a smile hovered round Wulfrie's lips, whilst Barbara tossed her head with a gesture of unconcealed contempt. It was evening, and Wulfrie had joined the family party, as he generally did for a short time when he was at home.

"Of course, the girls aren't going out anywhere at present," continued Gerald; "but it does not do for us to hold aloof too long. Come, now; be sensible, and say what day will suit you. The Thompsons were good enough to leave the choice to you."

Wulfrie looked impatient, and muttered something that Gerald pretended not to hear.

"When did you see them?" asked Celia, with a little more interest than she generally appeared to take over anything.

"Hector came to my studio to-day," answered Gerald. "I was at work on your picture, and he offered me five pounds down for that study in chalk of your head when I had done with it."

Celia blushed and bridled and looked foolishly pleased, but a dark frown contracted Wulfrie's face.

"I hope you knocked the fellow down for his impudence," he said, without, however, any heat of manner.

Gerald laughed, as if it were all a very good joke.

"What am I to say, Celia? Shall he have it or not?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't care!" she answered, with an affected toss of the head. "I'm sure it's nothing to me."

"I think we'll wait till we are a little more pressed for money before we begin selling portraits of our sisters to strangers," said Wulfrie.

Gerald and Celia both laughed.

"Strangers, indeed! Much you know about

it! Why, the Thompsons are amongst our very oldest friends."

"Who are they?"

"He is mayor of the place. They live in one of the best houses in the town. They are very well off. Hector has travelled a great deal, and been all round the world; and Fergus is a scholar, and has been to Oxford. There are two very jolly girls. You ought to know them, Wulf; and as they are never ill, it is no use waiting for a professional visit. You must just come with me some evening to dine there in a quiet way."

"Very well," answered Wulfrie, after a short pause, "I will do as you wish."

Barbara looked half surprised, but made no comment, and Gerald was pleased to have carried his point.

"I've never seen any of your work yet, Gerald," remarked Wulfrie, a little later. "I've been so taken up with my own affairs that I have had no time to think of yours. What are you doing, and how are you getting on?"

"Come into my studio and smoke a cigar, and see for yourself," answered Gerald. "I've always plenty of work on hand. In fact, I have almost too much; for my ideas come so fast that I have not time to finish one thing before I have to begin another."

Gerald spoke in the self-satisfied way habitual to him, but Wulfrie looked doubtful.

"I should have thought it would pay better to finish off one piece of work ready for sale before beginning another. Do your patrons like to be kept waiting for an indefinite time for their pictures?"

Barbara began to laugh; but nothing ever put Gerald out. He answered with his careless smile: "Oh, as for that, I paint for my own pleasure and satisfaction more than for anything else. It's a necessity to me to give my thoughts expression in some way; the other is quite a secondary consideration."

"Ah!" returned Wulfrie, with a kind of good-humored dryness; and he gave Barbara a look of reproof as he caught her murmured words:

"Yes, quite; so long as he can sponge upon his relatives, and live in elegant idleness."

Wulfrie had an odd sort of affection for this brilliant, handsome, good-for-nothing young brother of his—perhaps their radical differences of temperament formed a link of attraction; possibly Gerald's lofty and almost scornful patronage amused and pleased him by its frankness and simplicity.

He followed him willingly to his studio that night. His day's work had been laborious,

and he felt more disposed for a chat with his brother than for burning the midnight oil over his books.

He had not visited the studio before. He had always been busy, and Gerald looked upon him in the light of a Goth or Vandal, upon whom the treasures of art would be entirely thrown away.

As a matter of fact, Wulfrie, although not professing any knowledge of art, had lived long enough in London to have acquired a kind of unconscious culture on the subject; and his knowledge of anatomy gave him a critical insight into figure-drawing that received a severe shock as he stood before Gerald's canvases.

He put his hands in his pockets and looked at his brother's productions with an odd sort of compression about the corners of his lips. The room was warm and bright—the gas lighted it up well. Gerald cast himself into his favorite chair, and lighted a cigar.

“What do you expect to realise by the sale of a work like this?” asked Wulfrie, presently.

The picture represented the bearing of Elaine into the hall, where king Arthur and his queen and knights were assembled. It was only half finished, nevertheless the composition and coloring made a great impression

upon the young doctor. He felt much disposed to laugh.

"Oh, as for that," answered Gerald, negligently, "I suppose it would fetch a good sum in a London exhibition; but the Academy is no good unless one has influence at headquarters. The Grosvenor is more my style. I dare say I may send it there next year, if I get it finished in time. It's rather in the Burne-Jones style, don't you think?"

"Hum!" returned Wulfrie, doubtfully. "The fact is, my dear fellow, pictures aren't in my line; but if you'll allow me to make the remark, that young female lying there is in an absolutely impossible attitude. Nothing short of an attack of catalepsy could throw her into a posture like that."

Gerald smiled indulgently.

"My good fellow, I had a model."

"I don't care if you had a dozen models—the thing's impossible."

"Well, I wonder who is the best judge of drawing—you or I?"

Wulfrie laughed good-naturedly, and took a chair opposite to his brother.

"Now, look here, Gerald, let's be serious a minute and talk business. Will this art of yours ever make you a decent livelihood?"

Gerald waved his white hand as if such a

question as that were quite beneath his concern; and the elder brother continued, coolly—

"Because, if it won't, it's high time you turned your attention to something that will."

Gerald laughed negligently.

"Anything else, old fellow? Any other suggestion to make? Do you want me as a supplementary assistant in the surgery, like Barbara?"

"No, thanks; I'll dispense with that gratification. But what about the law? That was to have been your profession once, was it not?"

"Yes, once; but it was no go. A born artist can't go and settle down to that kind of drudgery. It's an impossibility, though not one that you will understand, I dare say."

Wulfric compressed the corners of his lips as he glanced round the artist's studio; but all he said was: "Didn't I hear something about a novel, or a poem, or something? Haven't you a second string to your bow?"

"Oh, yes! I have written a good deal at one time or another."

"And published anything?"

"No; but I have sometimes thought of bringing out a volume of poetry."

"At your own expense?"

"I dare say. What does it matter at whose expense?"

"It would matter very little if you were a millionaire, but, as things stand at present, it is of some considerable importance that you should begin to turn your many talents to some practical account. Have you ever made any money by your art so far?"

"I have sold a few sketches to the people about," answered Gerald, carelessly. "I've never cared very much about that part of the business."

"But it's about time you began to care now. Is there any chance of your writings becoming at all profitable?"

Wulfrie had his own ideas about the market value of the pictures, and was not sanguine there; but he could still hope that the literary work might be more successful.

"I don't think poetry pays well," answered Gerald; "at least, not till you've got your name up. But I've got a novel in hand which I think will make a sensation when it comes out, and a successful novelist's fortune is made from that day forward, I believe. But, for my own part, I believe in my pictures the most. My inspirations generally come to me in the form of pictures for the brush rather than the pen."

Wulfrie mused a little and then spoke.

"Well, look here, Gerald. Of course, you

know as well as I do that you have got your way to make in life in some way or another. You have very little private property—so little as hardly to be worth considering—and, if anything happened to our mother, this house would be sold at once, and you would lose your home. I have every reason to hope that I shall be able to look after the girls; indeed, if I keep my health I think there is no reasonable doubt on that point; but you will have eventually to shift for yourself, and it seems to me that the sooner you learn to do so the better. You cannot go on for ever in this desultory, easy-going way.”

Wulfrie spoke very quietly and good-temperedly; but Gerald looked decidedly offended at his tone.

“I do not quite understand you, nor do I know by what right you lay down the law to me. I am sure I work hard enough.”

“That may be; but I want to see you turn your work to more account. I have a certain right to speak, seeing that I occupy the position of head of the house. Look here, Gerald; don't you take offence where none is meant. Just listen to me for half a minute. All I want you to do is this: make a start of some kind. Bestir yourself

to sell your pictures, or to get commissions. I know this place thinks well of you—at least, I am told so; see if you can't do something. Aren't there local exhibitions where you could get your pictures taken?"

Gerald looked very disdainful.

"I don't care about provincial exhibitions, thank you."

Wulfrie was more patient than Barbara. He did not lose his temper.

"Well, go your own way," he answered, quietly; "you ought to know the tricks of your own trade better than I, and I don't want to hurry you. We'll say no more about it for a few months to come, and then by that time I shall hope to hear of something a little more definite."

Gerald looked relieved. He was a born procrastinator, and a respite of some months just suited him. He was angry with Wulfrie for daring in any way to take him to task, and yet there was something in his brother's strong personality and cool air of mastery that was very difficult to withstand.

So then the subject was changed, and the two young men parted amicably enough. Wulfrie, judging his brother to a certain extent by himself, believed that he would be a little roused from his apathy, and would at

least bestir himself as much as in him lay; whilst Gerald told himself that there was no hurry, and that something was sure to turn up all in good time.

A few days later Wulfrie and Gerald dined together at the house of Mr. Thompson, the leading magnate of St. Hilda. He was a pleasant, if rather a pompous man, and gave his guests an excellent dinner. He had lost his wife some years ago; but his two grown-up daughters, handsome, showy girls, played hostess with great good-humor and gusto; whilst the elder son was a noisy young fellow, who seemed to think the more he talked the better every one would be pleased.

The brothers were not the only guests present, but Wulfrie being the stranger was considered of the most importance. He took in Miss Thompson, whom her brother called Georgie, and was made a good deal of by all present; for St. Hilda, though not much acquainted with the young doctor personally, was proud of his talents, which were now being recognized far and wide.

Wulfrie was more at ease under the honor thus done him than Gerald had expected him to be, and he was not quite certain that it pleased him to see his brother acquit himself so well. In point of fact the young doctor,

who had not unfrequently dined at the tables of his senior physicians and surgeons in London, and had met there men of great culture and eminence, was not at all dazzled or abashed by the attentions paid him by the good people of St. Hilda. He was able to hold his own very well, and would have been much amused had he been aware of his brother's feelings regarding him.

But this supposition proved quite groundless, and Gerald would have been equally surprised on his side had he been able to read Wulfrie's opinions of the people whom he met.

A young man fresh from town is rather predisposed to hold somewhat cheaply an assembly comprising the quiet, humdrum inhabitants of a small country town; but Wulfrie was not inclined to be censorious for the most part, and made friends easily enough with the older men present. But what he did not like was the tone adopted by Hector Thompson and some of his contemporaries, with whom his brother Gerald seemed very intimate.

Gerald and Hector were evidently very close friends, and at the end of the table, where, on the departure of the ladies, the young men clustered together, the noise was fast and furious, and the style of talk, by what Wulfrie could gather, anything but refined or elevat-

ing. His face clouded over unconsciously as his eye rested upon his brother's flushed face and sparkling eyes. He was pretty certain Gerald had been drinking more wine than was good for him, and his brows drew together into a frown of anxious thought.

Nobody was noticing him just now. Local politics were engrossing the elders of the party and the juniors were full of their own noisy, merriment. Wulfrie belonged to neither set, and was free for the moment to indulge his own thoughts unchecked; but a voice at his elbow aroused him from the reverie into which he had fallen.

"I must say, Meynal, I am uncommonly glad to think you have settled at home for good."

Wulfrie looked round quickly, and saw that Fergus Thompson had slipped into the seat beside him. Little as he knew of the Thomps—so little, indeed, that he had almost forgotten their very name—he had had some slight acquaintance with the boys in their childhood, and had felt a sort of liking for Fergus.

"Thanks," he answered, with a quick glance at the speaker; "but you have some special reasons for saying so, have you not?"

"Yes, I have. I think it's high time

somebody was on the spot to look after that brother of yours."

Wulfric glanced at Gerald, and shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Brothers have not much influence over brothers," he said.

Fergus made an expressive gesture, as if he, too, had found out that much.

"True enough in most cases," he answered; "but in this instance you hold the purse-strings, don't you?"

"To a certain extent I do; but, so far, things are hardly settled. Gerald has never appealed to me for money yet."

"No? Well, I do not think it will be long before he does. He is here three or four evenings a week, and he cannot always win."

Wulfric's face grew grave, and rather stern.

"Do you mean that they gamble every night?"

"They play cards regularly, and for money. I don't know very much about what goes on. It isn't in my line. But Gerald is weak. He is very easily led. He wants a strong hand over him. It is Hector's fault more than his. Hector leads him into it. I have spoken to him again and again; but he won't listen. He says Gerald is his own master, and can do as he likes."

Wulfrie made no reply, and a general rising to join the ladies put an end to the conversation for the present; but he went home with a mind full of anxious thought.

"Barbara," said Wulfrie to her one evening, as they paced the shrubbery together instead of going into the study, "does Celia go much to the Thompsons, do you know?"

The question came so suddenly that Barbara was a little time in replying.

"I don't know much about Celia's doings. I dare say she goes there pretty often."

Wulfrie bent his brows in thought.

"Do you think there is any attachment between her and Hector Thompson?"

"I don't know. Celia is always admired; but Hector has been away some time, and I don't often go to the house. I don't much care for the people."

"Nor I," answered Wulfrie, "except Fergus—he's a good sort of fellow, I believe. Of course, it's no business of mine exactly; Celia is of age, and must choose for herself. But that young Thompson is not the stamp of man I should like one of my sisters to marry; and with a fellow of that sort one never knows if he is in earnest or not. Celia is very inexperienced, and I don't wish to stand by and see her trifled with." And Wulfrie's face looked very stern.

"What can you do?" asked Barbara.

"That's what I want to know. First of all, I must find out the truth. Have you noticed anything?"

Barbara shook her head. She felt a little compunction as she realised how very little she heeded the affairs of other people, whilst Wulfrie, with so much to occupy him, found time and occasion to be anxious on their account.

"Would not Celia confide in you?"

"No, indeed!"

Wulfrie stopped short and looked down at his sister. His sternly-set face expressed a certain sense of dissatisfaction.

"How is that? I thought sisters always told those things to one another."

"I am sure Celia would not tell me."

"Nor you her, I suppose?"

"No."

Wulfrie walked on again in silence, and Barbara paced at his side feeling half ashamed of herself, yet hardly knowing why.

"I can try and find out for you, Wulf," she said presently, rather timidly.

He made no reply.

"Shall I ask Celia?"

"No, certainly not."

"Is there nothing I can do to help you?"

It isn't fair all the worry should come upon you."

Wulfrie stopped short again, and looked down at her steadily, in a way that made her glance fall before his.

"If you were fond of Gerald and Celia you might be able to help me: but as it is, I think you would most likely do more harm than good."

Barbara looked up to say, pleadingly, "It isn't all my fault, Wulf, indeed it isn't. They have never been fond of me. We get on pretty well; but—but—you see——"

"Yes, I see; I have seen all along," answered Wulfrie, quietly. "No, Barbara, I don't suppose the fault is all yours, and it is not for me to lecture you. Only it is a pity. Our home might have been such a much happier place than it is."

CHAPTER VIII.

LITTLE JACK STONE.

"I DOES try to be patient, I does," said little Jack Stone to himself, as he fetched a deep sigh and twisted his hands restlessly together. "But it ain't easy, that it ain't; and if 'twouldn't bother mother to see me, I could cry, I could."

Jack looked round him as he spoke, for although like many children he was fond of talking out loud to himself, he did not care to be overheard. But he need not have been at all afraid. The little cottage was quite empty this hot summer's morning. From where he lay in the inner room the child could see the open door, and watch the branches of white roses as they danced up and down in the golden sunshine. He could hear the sound of the waves upon the shingly beach fifty feet below, and the cries of the sea birds as they circled about the cliffs or skimmed over the shining water; but he could not see the sea itself. He could catch nothing but a glimpse of the steep path that led down the face of the cliff, and the roses framing

the doorway. For three weeks he had lain there, horribly tired of inactivity, yet doomed to it still for some weeks to come; and the child who had never before been ill and had spent all his life out of doors, indulging in every hardy enjoyment and active prank that ingenuity of body or mind could suggest, felt as if the long, weary days never would end, and as if he could really bear imprisonment no longer. Had it not been for the trouble in his mother's eyes whenever he gave way to his feverish grief and impetuous sense of despair, little Jack would have been less brave than he had shown himself to be.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! I wonder what I'll do all day. I wish I could go to sleep like a dog and only wake up when there was something to do," and then Jack's voice suddenly ceased, and his eyes took an intent and listening look. "Sounds like somebody coming down the path," he said, softly. "Perhaps it's Miss Barbara, after all. 'Taint Doctur Meynal, he makes more noise than that."

The next moment Jack's eyes were bewildered by the sight of a totally unexpected apparition. A young lady, dressed all in white, with a wide brimmed hat and drooping feathers, had stopped at the cottage door and was knocking gently upon the panels.

"Come in, please," said the bewildered Jack. "There ain't nobody at home but me, and I can't move. Was it mother as you wanted to see? She's out washing. She won't be home till night."

The young lady had approached whilst Jack was speaking, and now stood at his bedside. The little boy saw then that it was Miss Dumaresq, from the Cedars.

"It was you I wished to see, Jack, not your mother," said Reinée, with a very sweet smile. "I heard you had broken your leg, and I came to hear all about it, and see if there was anything you wanted. May I sit down a little while? You are so nice and cool in here. I have a brother who once broke his leg, and he wanted such a lot of amusing. He kept me hard at work amusing him for ever so many weeks."

Jack's face expressed a vivid interest and pleasure.

"How did he break his leg?" he asked. "Did he get climbing up rocks like me?"

"No, his was broken at football when he was at school; but they sent him home to be nursed. He kept me busy, I can tell you. How do you manage to amuse yourself all day?"

"It's pretty dull," answered Jack, but he

spoke brightly, for he was wonderfully cheered by all he heard. "Sometimes I get dreadful low, but I does try to be patient—I does indeed. Miss Barbara comes in pretty often; only she's so busy now she says she can't come as much as she did—and the new clergyman—the curate they call him—he came once; but I expect he's busy, too. I liked him, though he looked grave and was so tall, I was most frightened at first; but I think he's a good man, don't you?"

Reinée smiled at the question.

"I hope he is. I suppose he is as he is a clergyman. I have only seen him in church. He preached a very good sermon. He has not been here long, has he?"

"No, only since Mr. Sargent got ill and had to go away. I wish he'd come again. I couldn't quite understand all he said. I want him to explain it some more: but perhaps you could tell me as well as he." And he cast a quick, searching glance at the face of his visitor.

Reinée's face encouraged him to proceed.

"He said as having pain to bear ought to make us better like—'bring us near to God,' he said; and he talked about Jesus carrying of his cross, and said it was something like that if we were brave and tried to be like him.

I can't remember it all—but it was nice, it was—only I don't think I rightly understand it."

Reinée's face had grown sweet and serious. Little as she was used to put her deeper thoughts into words, she felt more able to do so in presence of this simple, childish questioner than she would have done before one of her own age and station.

"Perhaps, Jack, he meant that as Jesus had carried that heavy cross, and borne all the pain and shame for us without one murmur, so we ought not to complain if he asks us to bear pain, too, when he sends it; but try to be brave and patient as he was. We can none of us be much like him; but we must all try to copy him as well as we can."

Reinée's fair face had flushed as she spoke, and Jack looked up at her with deeply seated admiration and reverence.

"Yes, that was what Mr. Leslie said—but I think you make it clearer, I do. I guess you're ever so good. I just know as you couldn't ever do anything wrong."

Reinée smiled back at him as she answered, simply: "Indeed, Jack, you're quite wrong there. You can't see my faults and I can't see yours; but God sees both our hearts, and he knows that I have my sins just as much

as you have. Perhaps, in his sight, mine look blacker than yours." And, as the girl glanced round the poor room and contrasted her own lot with that of the little lad beside her, she was filled with a deep sense of humility and gratitude, feeling, as perhaps she had never done before to the same extent, that from those to whom much has been given much will be required.

But Jack looked at her with an incredulous smile and shook his head vigorously. Reinée did not pursue the argument.

"You have not told me about yourself, Jack; nor how you met with your accident."

"I was climbing after sea-gulls' eggs, I was," answered Jack. "And I got giddy like and fell off and broke my leg; I might have been killed, I might."

"Poor little boy! How pleased you must all be that things were no worse."

"Father and mother is," answered Jack, his face working a little oddly and expressing a variety of feelings, "but I ain't sure that I am. Sometimes I think it might have been best for them if I'd a been killed outright."

"Oh, Jack!" exclaimed Reinée, shocked.

"I can't help thinking things sometimes," explained Jack, defending himself for his assertion. "Times is so hard. I sometimes don't

know what will become of us. Father's been ill and hasn't had no regular work for months, and can't get nothing but a job now and then; and mother has to slave at washing or charring till sometimes she's almost beat. Then there's Alice as is worse than no good; and David, who's at sea and used to help a bit, hasn't been heard of for ever so long. And I thought as I'd be able to help as I was getting a big boy, and I took to getting seaweed and shells and eggs and things and selling them in the town, and I did make a bit like that, now and again. And now I've broke my leg and I'm only a burden, and there'll be doctoring to pay for as well, and I shan't be no good for ever so long; and I think we'll all have to starve—we were pretty nigh it before," and Jack's brave little face quivered all over.

The tears were very near to Reinée's eyes, but she would not let them be seen.

"No, Jack," she answered, gently; "you shall not starve. I will take care of that. Tell me, what sort of work can your father do?"

"He can turn his hand to most things, can father," answered Jack; "but he likes minding cows and pigs and poultry best. He was brought up on a farm, he was."

"And what wages does he earn when he is in work?"

"He gets half-a-crown a day when he's jobbing; but he can't never hardly get more than a day or two in a week, and sometimes he gets nothing. He ain't strong since he's been ill, and folks seem to think as he can't work; but he can now."

"And if he got regular work at the Hall farm at eighteen shillings or a pound a week, would you be pretty comfortable then?"

Jack's eyes sparkled, and he rubbed his hands gleefully together.

"Why, we'd live in clover altogether then. I can't hardly believe as such a thing would ever happen."

"We will see about it, Jack. It shall be a secret between us; but I almost fancy it will."

Reinée knew her kind, indulgent father would never deny her her first request of the kind. She knew he was not altogether suited with farm hands, and was confident that any protégé of hers would be taken at once.

"And now, Jack," continued the girl, opening a dainty little basket she carried, "don't you think it's almost time you had some dinner? My brother was always wanting a meal when he was getting better. He said



An Unexpected Visitor.

it passed away the time better than anything."

Jack's eager eyes expressed the state of his feelings eloquently. They sparkled with delight as the basket was unpacked, and its contents spread upon the bed. First there came a snowy napkin, that served as a tablecloth; then followed two light, yet substantial, chicken *patés*, some slices of pudding, such as Jack had never seen before, and in a little basket by themselves some such big, ripe strawberries as made Jack's eyes grow round with wonder.

"Now I want to see you make a good dinner, Jack," said Reinée, "and then I must be thinking of going."

Jack needed no further encouragement; but set to work upon the tempting viands with an energy that showed how sharp-set was his boy's appetite; all the more sharp from the fever that had hung about him for some time, but had left him now altogether.

Whilst he was enjoying his food, and Reinée was enjoying the sight of his pleasure, she was aware of the tapping as of crutches approaching from without, and presently a lame girl of apparently about fourteen years of age came limping into the cottage and across to the inner room. Her face was thin and brown

with the sun, but it was contracted either by pain or temper into an expression far from pleasant; and there was something in the expression of the sombre, dark eyes so hostile and menacing that Reinée started as she met their glance, although she smiled the next moment at her own weakness.

"Is that your sister?" she asked of Jack.

"Yes," he answered, rather uneasily, "that's our Alice."

"Alice," said Reinée, "will you come and have some dinner with Jack? I am sure he will spare you a share. I dare say you are ready for some as well as he."

But the lame girl, who had stopped short upon the threshold as soon as she saw the stranger, only scowled darkly as Reinée spoke, and turning abruptly round, limped away upon her crutches; but she paused to take some crusts of bread from the cupboard in the outer room, though she had tacitly refused to partake of Jack's banquet.

Reinée looked perplexed, and the brother hung his head as if ashamed.

"Don't be vexed, please," he said, timidly; "it's only our Alice. She can't abide strangers nor gentlefolk, and she's a bit queer always. Dr. Meynal thinks as he could do her hip good if she'd go to the hospital;

but she goes pretty nigh mad at the thought of such a thing. Folks do say as she's wrong in the head; but she's a good scholar, and likes books a deal better than I do. She's good to us, is Alice, but mother's often troubled about her."

"Perhaps its being lame that makes her shy with strangers," said Reinée, gently. "Never mind that, Jack. I will make friends with her, if I can, and if I can't I must do without. Now tell me, as you don't care much about books, is there anything else you think would amuse you, if we could manage it for you?"

Jack's face beamed with pleasure.

"You are good, you are, a real first-rater!" Reinée smiled to herself, at the thought of what her mother would think, could she hear Jack's eulogium upon her daughter. "I saw an old fisherman mounting and drying seaweed once, and he sort of showed me how to do it and it looked jolly; but it wants blotting paper, and a book on purpose to mount it when it's done properly, and I never could get the things, though he said it paid in the long run."

"If I were to see about those, could you get the sea-weed?" asked Reinée, smiling.

"Oh, yes! Alice would get me that; but

then it's so dark in here, I'm not sure that I could see to do any good," and Jack's face fell suddenly.

"Couldn't you be out of doors, now that it is so warm and bright? If you were lifted carefully, I don't think it would hurt your leg."

Jack looked eagerly out at the open door.

"I should like it no end," he said, wistfully, "but the bed wouldn't get out at the door, and I don't think the doctor would let me lie on the ground."

"No," answered Reinée, smiling, "I don't suppose he would. Well, we must think what we can do; and I must be going, but it won't be long before I will come again."

"I'd like to see you every day, I would," said Jack, with his broadest and brightest smile; and Reinée smiled and stroked his curly head and went away, leaving a great deal of sunshine behind her in the heart of one weary little child.

Every one knows how strong a hold first protégés take upon the imagination of youthful workers. Reinée went away full of schemes for the benefit of the Stones in general and little Jack in particular; and so engrossed was she in her thoughts that she met Wulfrie Meyual face to face on the narrow cliff path

before she was in the least aware of his proximity.

"I have just come from one of your patients, Dr. Meynal," she said, holding out her hand with a smile. "I was just wishing to see you about him. He is so tired of lying in that dark room, poor little fellow, and I wanted to know, if I had a sort of couch fixed for him against the cottage wall out of the sun, whether you would consent to his being carried there on fine days to lie there instead of on his bed. He would find it much less dull, and would be getting the fresh air and sunshine."

"It would be a capital thing for him," answered Wulfric, "if it could be managed."

"I think I could manage it easily enough, if you approved it. I feel so sorry for the child. It is so very dull for him."

Wulfric smiled with just a touch of grimness. He was thinking of some of the misery he often witnessed, before which little Jack's troubles sank into insignificance; but he said nothing of this to Reinée. How could she understand? she, whose whole life was one dream of luxury and pleasure.

"If you can carry out such a plan, you will be doing him a great kindness, Miss Dumaresq, as well as an undoubted benefit."

It was altogether a red-letter day for little Jack Stone. First there had been this wonderful visit from the young lady at the Hall. Then his doctor had paid him a flying visit, and told him he had made a friend of the queen of the fairies—an opinion he was quite prepared to endorse—and later on, about three o'clock in the afternoon, the village carpenter and his assistant came up to the cottage with a lot of blocks and lengths of wood, and were busy there for a couple of hours—so busy, that they could not hear Jack's oft-repeated questions to know what they were about. Before they left, however, the man looked in and told him his orders were to make a wide sort of couch in the shelter of the north wall, and that he believed some cushions and things were to be sent down from the Hall to make it comfortable by day. The cushions could be taken in at night easily, whilst the woodwork was immoveable and safe from molestation. It seemed, indeed, to Jack as if a wonderful new life had begun for him.

The cushions came down from the Hall that same evening, together with a message that Stone had better step up to see the farm bailiff the first thing the following day.

There were bright faces and cheerful hearts in the little cliff cottage that night. There

had been anxiety, sickness and trouble there for many long days, but it seemed as if brighter times were dawning at last.

Only the lame girl's face was dark and clouded, and it was long before Jack could coax her to say what was in her mind; but at last it came out.

"I hate taking things from rich folks. They just come to amuse themselves and give what don't cost them nothing, and think themselves awful kind and good. I won't have none of it. They don't do it because they care for us, only to amuse themselves. They wouldn't lift a finger for us if it gave them any trouble, that they wouldn't, only when it's a sort of game."

Jack was silent. He did not in the least understand the bearing of his sister's excited speech.

Reinée went home that day in a thoughtful mood, and for many days, as she pursued, with unostentatious and loving care the little offices she had set herself to perform, a shade of unusual gravity rested on her sweet face, and her eyes would grow dreamy with the thoughts that were rising within her.

She felt her ignorance in spiritual things very keenly at this time, and longed for a friend to guide and teach her. She could not, alas,

go to her mother, and after the unconscious rebuff she had once received at Barbara's hands, she felt shy of re-opening the subject with her. She saw more of Juliet Granby just now, and the two girls had become increasingly intimate of late. And so one day after Julie, had been spending the afternoon with her Reinée propounded the question she had been pondering with a little more abruptness than was usual with her.

"Juliet, are you religious?"

"I hardly know what you mean, Reinée," answered Juliet, quickly. "Of course I read the Bible—sometimes—and go to church, and all that sort of thing; but I never profess to understand the ecstatic sort of religious enthusiasm that seems to fill some people. I should not care to have it if I could. I think that poetry and music are my most real religion."

"Yes?" queried Reinée, dreamily, "I have heard other people say the same; but do they satisfy you?"

"Satisfy me? Why no, of course not. Who could be satisfied in this narrow, narrow little life?"

"Some people are," answered Reinée, in the same dreamy way. "That dear old blind woman by the church is quite the happiest

person I know; and yet she has had more troubles than fall to the lot of most. It is her religion that makes her happy. It is a real, living thing to her. Why do not we feel the same?—we who have so much more to be thankful for.”

Juliet smiled with something of scorn, but Reinée did not see, neither would she have been daunted by a little contempt. She was too much in earnest.

“My dear Reinée, surely you are not going to institute comparisons between our minds and those of poor untaught people. Don’t you know that it is the most ignorant of the community who are the most religious—or superstitious? When you come to that level it does not much matter which you call it.”

Reinée made no reply. She did not appear shocked—unfortunately, she had known too much of such talk to hear it with any great surprise; but her eyes grew deep with the intensity of the thoughts at work within her, and presently she said, softly: “You can call it superstition if you will, Juliet; but I know that there is a grand, grand truth behind—a truth worth all the learning of this world put together. When we come to die, Juliet, how do you think things will look to us then?”

Juliet laughed uneasily.

"What dismal spirits you are in to-day, Reinée! What is the matter with you?"

The face that Reinée turned towards her companion was anything but dismal.

"I think," she said with a peculiarly sweet smile, "that I am learning to be happier than I have ever been before."

Juliet looked at her companion with some dissatisfaction.

"Is that because you are growing religious?" she asked, with a half impatient sigh. "It seems to me that every one gets spoiled when they begin to take up——"

And then Juliet stopped short, half ashamed of the thought that had prompted these words. Reinée looked at her thoughtfully.

"I was hoping you would be able to help me," she said, in her simple way.

Juliet's cheek flushed, and her glance fell in a sort of compunction she could not understand.

"I am afraid I can't," she said, with a humility very unusual with her; and as she walked home and thought again of Reinée's words and look, she almost wished she had been able to help her friend along the narrow way that she had often said she more than half despised.

CHAPTER IX.

COMING CHANGES.

"IF I were you, Gerald, I would go to London, and see what real life is like. What is the use of letting your talents rust and moulder in a little place like this? You are a man. You have some liberty of action. Why do you not go away, and make yourself a great name elsewhere?"

It was Juliet Granby who spoke, and her dark eyes were alight with her own eager enthusiasm. Her listener was leaning against the rustic arbor door in an attitude of graceful, negligent ease.

"You will be appreciated there, Gerald; how can you expect it here, where the people are only half educated or half asleep? If I were a man, I would not wait long before I found myself in the great vortex of life. Go, Gerald: your own family will never recognise your talents until you return to them with the victor's laurels, that you must surely win when you mix in a world of culture and intelligence."

Gerald smiled at the picture thus held up

before him, but his answer showed a certain amount of practical knowledge of the world.

"That is all very fine, Juliet; but Rome was not built in a day, and it takes time for a young man without name or connections to make his way in the world. How am I to live meanwhile?"

"Would not your mother or your brother make you an allowance—you could repay them afterwards?"

Gerald shrugged his shoulders.

"My mother has not the power to do so; and Wulf is such a Goth, he would scorn the idea of my being able to make my way alone in London by my art. He strongly insisted the other day that one of my figures was out of drawing."

Gerald was still sore about the affront put upon him. Wulfrie's cool air of assurance had been very trying, and he had not forgotten the episode. But Juliet was intent upon her own thoughts and plans.

"Have you no money of your own? Can't you sell your pictures, or get some any other way, just to make a start, which is all you want?"

Gerald thought for a little while.

"Well, perhaps I might manage it somehow. I suppose I could demand my portion if I

really wished it; but possibly I can manage something without that."

"Ah, yes, I feel sure you can!" cried Juliet, ardently; "and just think what it would be like to change this slow, humdrum life for the whirl and glitter and vortex of life in a great city! Ah, if only I were a man, it would not be long before I should find myself there!"

Gerald was not easily roused out of his habitual indolent calm, but there was something rather infectious in Juliet's enthusiasm and ardour. As they talked together in glowing terms of the great future that lay before him, he began to feel aroused from his careless state of ease, and to believe, as she did, that a great career lay before him, only waiting for him to enter upon so soon as he should have joined the ranks of genius to which he was entitled to belong.

Juliet felt like a maiden of romance, girding his armour upon, a youthful knight, and speeding him to the battle by words of cheer and promise.

Gerald and Juliet had a great deal of rashness and confidence, and before they had talked together for an hour, it had become almost a settled thing that he was to go to London; whilst the credit of the scheme was allowed by both to be hers.

Their conference was interrupted by the return of Mrs. Granby and Barbara, who had been making a tour of inspection round the garden and poultry yard; whilst the girl had taken the opportunity of telling her wise old friend all about her new duties and labors, and had asked her advice on many knotty points. Barbara had always been fond of Mrs. Granby, but she had never felt quite such a respect for her opinions as she did to-day. It seemed as if the old lady understood and sympathised with everything, and yet had a sound discrimination enabling her to discover true from false, and detect the least taint of insincerity, or, as Barbara called it, "humbug."

The girl felt that in the mistress of the cottage she possessed a valuable ally, to whom she might always safely apply in cases where she was in difficulty or doubt.

When they reached the other two, who had soon left them to prosecute their journey of inspection alone, they saw that an earnest conversation had been carried on also in this quarter.

Gerald was unusually silent as he partook of Mrs. Granby's excellent tea. Juliet hoped he would keep his own counsel, but that was not Gerald's forte.

"Mrs. Granby," he said, looking up by-and-

by, "Juliet has been talking to me in a most edifying way about my duties to myself and others. You have brought her up to be wise beyond her years."

Mrs. Granby smiled in a way not quite easy to be understood, and Juliet colored and looked as if she would have silenced Gerald if she could.

Barbara glanced from one to the other, and her brother, feeling that he was making something of a sensation, proceeded with great deliberation.

"She tells me that I am letting my talents rust, and am wasting my life in idleness. I partly believe she is right, and mean to amend matters in the future. In point of fact, as soon as I can see my way, I am going to London."

Barbara laughed silently. As Gerald had no money to do this, it seemed a mere boast to talk of it.

Mrs. Granby glanced quietly at her granddaughter.

"Juliet has a theory that all talent is buried and useless unless it is carried to London. When she grows older and wiser she will, perhaps, learn her mistake."

Juliet flushed angrily.

"At any rate, in my case I think she is

right," answered Gerald, who, when once an idea took hold of him, could be quietly tenacious of purpose. "Other people have told me the same. You see I belong to an advanced school of art, that has only come to be appreciated in the great centre of civilization."

Juliet gave him a glance of approval; Barbara's face expressed an amused disdain, whilst Mrs Granby said, in her quiet way: "London is a great place, a wonderful place, and great fortunes and names are made and lost there. Every man must, to a certain extent, be the master of his own life, and decide upon his own career; but to go to London to make fame and fortune that are denied at home, or, at least, only partially assured, is a dangerous step, and one likely to be fraught with peril. Juliet has hardly experience enough to advise you. Your brother would be a safer counsellor."

Gerald looked at Juliet with his gay smile. The counsel of the young and ardent is ever more pleasant to hear than that of the old and thoughtful. Of course, Mrs. Granby was no judge of his affairs. She was a good old soul, but old-fashioned and behind the times. One could listen respectfully to her advice, but it would be ridiculous to act upon it.

Barbara had risen to her feet and was drawing on her gloves.

"Gerald has been going to London, on and off, ever since I can remember," she remarked, in her incisive way. "Do not be afraid, Mrs. Granby; we shall believe in his going when he has really gone."

Gerald's smile expressed no annoyance. His temper was not easily ruffled—in that he possessed a decided advantage over Barbara—but Juliet, glancing in his face, saw a certain look of resolve about the set of his lips; and he made a slight gesture as much as to say that his mind was quite made up and would not easily be unmade.

Brother and sister went away together; and Juliet exclaimed, with some heat: "I cannot bear Barbara's sneering way with Gerald, as if he were quite beneath contempt; and he so immensely her superior really!"

"Brothers and sisters are not always quite wise with one another," answered Mrs. Granby, quietly; "they are inclined to be a little too intolerant of faults and failings from which none of us are exempt; but the wisest plan is to adopt the 'give and take' principle, and not to pay too much heed to the sharp speeches that wider experience teaches us to modify. A man who cannot stand a little home-made

ridicule and banter is scarcely likely to make his way in the world."

Juliet pursed up her lips and kept silence. She had learned to avoid arguments with her grandmother, who had a tiresome way of being always in the right about things.

Although what Mrs. Granby had said as regards brothers and sisters was undeniably true in the case of the Meynals, as well as in that of many more families, there are notable exceptions to every rule.

At that very time—that quiet evening hour—Reinée was standing upon the terrace watching the sunset-glow fade in the sky, and she was so absorbed in her own thoughts that she only awoke to the consciousness of outward impressions when her eyes were suddenly covered by a pair of strong hands, whilst a merry voice cried in her ear: "Caught, Reinée! Fairly caught! Who is it?"

"Clive!" cried Reinée, joyfully, and pulling his hands down she turned quickly round and clasped her arms about his neck, murmuring pretty, loving words of welcome.

Clive's caresses were as warm as hers. Brother and sister loved each other dearly, and had never had a quarrel since the days of their babyhood, but had grown up together in the closest ties of loving union. They

were never really happier than when in each other's society.

Clive was a fine, handsome youth, two years older than Reinée, but very like her, with the same well-cut features, high-bred carriage and air, and the same sweet and expressive dark eyes. His face was very brown from exposure to sun and wind, and he looked a picture of manly health and vigor. Reinée's eyes rested lovingly upon him, and she said presently, with a bewitching little smile: "My own, handsome boy!"

He laughed and kissed her again.

"I shall not waste compliments on you, little sister. You will have plenty by-and-by. Tell me, Reinée, are you happy here? What were you thinking of so seriously when I stole upon you unawares?"

"I will tell you some day. I will never have secrets from you, Clive; but I want to know more about you. Are you coming for a long visit?"

"I hope so, little sister. I have no intention of taking myself off—not, at any rate, before the shooting begins, and then, perhaps, we shall all go to Scotland together. And so you like this place, do you? And country life does not weary you to death?"

"I have been very happy here," answered

Reinée, with a bright smile, "and if you are here too, it will be quite perfect, I think."

Clive smiled, and drew his sister's arm within his, and thus they paced the terrace together.

"And I shall have you all to myself for once," said Reinée, pressing close to her brother's side. "I do not know when that has happened to us before, Clive."

"Not for some time," he answered; "life has been rather a whirl and a rush since you came out. But we shall not be quite alone for very long. Arthur Trevelyan is coming down shortly; but he will be no spoil-sport," and Clive smiled rather mischievously.

Reinée's face grew suddenly grave.

"Oh, Clive!" she exclaimed, quickly, "I am sorry! I do not want Arthur here."

Clive looked at her surprised.

"Not want him! Why, I thought——"

"I know what you thought; but it is all quite wrong. I have never liked him since I began to grow up, and learn a little of life; and I like him less and less every year that passes."

Clive whistled.

"Why, little sister, what is the meaning of all this? I thought it was a settled thing that you were to marry Arthur; and he

will be a peer before many years are out—some say in the course of a few months time. Old Lord Strafford's life is not worth a pin's purchase."

"That has nothing to do with it," answered Reinée, with a sort of forced quietness. "I could not marry any one I did not love; and I can never love Arthur Trevelyan."

Clive looked at her a little disturbed and perplexed.

"Why not, Reinée?"

"I am sure he is not a good man."

"I don't know, I'm sure," answered Clive, a little dubiously. "He always seems a very good fellow."

Reinée did not speak for a few minutes, and then she said, thoughtfully: "I often think there is a very great difference between a 'good fellow' and a good man."

Clive glanced again at his sister. The outline of her pure profile stood out in strong relief against the darkening sky. Something in the expression of her face struck him as being changed, though in what way he could hardly tell.

"She is lovelier than ever," was the thought in his mind; "Trevelyan will not give her up without a struggle." But what he said was, "Does mother know your views?"

"No," answered Reince, and there was some pain in her face now. "I am not very brave, Clive. Sometimes I am afraid of mamma. I want you to help me. I have never engaged myself to Arthur. He has never asked me to be his wife. I have known him from childhood, that is all. Why should it be taken for granted that I am to marry him?"

"You see, the match was made for you when you were still in the nursery. Trevelyan fell in love with you after a fashion when you were quite a child, and from a worldly point of view, of course the marriage is a good one. He is a good deal older than you; but twelve years does not seem so very much as one grows up. Trevelyan may or may not be what you call a good man. I do not feel able to judge a point like that; but, at least, he has always been faithful to you, which should be something in his favor. I admit that it has always been taken as a matter of course that you would marry him when the time came, and possibly without sufficient allowance being made for your independent opinion; but you know what mother is, and she has always looked upon you as a sort of lawful prey. If you did not like Trevelyan, it is a pity you did not find it out sooner. Things have gone rather far now."

And Clive, who liked to take life easily, looked at his sister as if he could find it in his heart to wish that she would think better of what she had said, and submit quietly to the destiny mapped out for her.

"I never had time to think until I came here," answered Reinée, gently. "Life used to be such a whirl, I seemed to be swept along without power to judge for myself; but I begin to see things differently now. Clive, you will be my friend, will you not?"

She turned and faced him as she spoke with a look that went to his heart. An appeal like that would never be made in vain, and in the present instance Clive felt more moved than he altogether liked. There was something in Reinée's face that touched him in an inexplicable fashion he could hardly understand.

"You and I will always stand together, Reinée," he answered, putting his hands upon her shoulders and looking straight into her eyes. "You may rely on me, little sister. Whatever your decision is, I will uphold it."

Sudden tears sprang to Reinée's eyes, showing how grateful this support was to her.

"My own, dear boy!" she answered, with a little tremulous smile; and then they resumed their walk together, and talked of other sub-

jects, until the time came to go indoors for dinner.

Reinée knew that there were difficulties and dangers lying in her path, not very far ahead, and she did not try to blind her eyes or to ignore their existence; but just for the time being, in the delight of having Clive at home for her companion every day and all day long, she could afford to put aside her sense of coming trouble, and enjoy the present as only those blessed with her happy temperament can enjoy things. Brother and sister rode, drove and boated together, exchanged confidences and indulged bright day-dreams, and led a simple, healthful life, that was as delightful to both as it was novel. They did not seek such society as St. Hilda had to offer. For the present they preferred to keep together and away from others, and scoured the country in a way that Reinée had had no opportunity of doing before.

Mr. and Mrs. Dumaresq were delighted to have their only son at home, and pleased for him to enjoy his sister's society to the full for a time.

"Let them take their fill of one another whilst they can get it," Mrs. Dumaresq sometimes observed to her husband. "I am glad for Reinée to have these weeks of liberty

and Clive's company, for her girlhood is fast drawing to a close, and when once she is married, no one can tell how her life may shape itself; and in any case, it is certain to be full of duties and engagements of all sorts. She has always had a very happy and easy life with us, and I am pleased that it should continue so to the very end. She has not flagged or moped at all down here. No doubt the knowledge that she would not long be here has kept her up."

"We shall miss her sadly when she goes," the father would say, with a little sigh. "She is quite the life of the house."

"Yes, we shall miss her; but we must get over that. We must not stand in the way of her happiness and welfare."

Clive, however, who saw more of his sister than their parents did, was not entirely satisfied that she was altogether as carelessly happy as they supposed, or as she had been in old days. He often caught her musing deeply, so deeply that she was lost for the time being to all sense of outward impressions; and although at such times there was no look of unhappiness in her face, yet there was a depth and earnestness of expression that often awoke within him an odd sensation akin to pain.

"Reinée," he said suddenly to her one day, as he surprised her in one of these reveries, "you have never told me what all these sober thoughts are about. You are changed, little sister, from what you were when I saw you last, and I want to know what it all means."

It was Sunday afternoon, and Reinée had been reading to her old blind friend; but she had returned now, and her brother had found her in one of their favorite haunts.

She looked up with a smile as Clive seated himself beside her, and slipped her hand into his as she often did when they were alone together.

"Am I changed, Clive?" she asked. "Sometimes I am afraid I am not; but I want to be."

"You need not want that, Reinée," he answered, quickly; "for nobody who knows you could wish you a bit different from what you are."

She smiled and shook her head.

"Ah, Clive, you say that because you don't know!" He put his arm caressingly round her.

"What don't I know, little sister? What is it that is troubling you?"

"I hardly know how to put it, I don't know if you will understand. I want to make

my life of use, Clive. I don't want to be a mere pleasure-seeking butterfly; I know I have my own duties to think of. I am given my place in life and I mean to stay there, and try to do God service by serving him where he has put me. But I want to make my life real earnest, not all ease and pleasure. I want to live so that when I come to die I shall not have to look back on a long vista of wasted opportunities and an idle, selfish life of ease, without any thought of the great, eternal future."

Reinée could speak more easily to Clive than to any one else; but even to him she could not say all she would. He was silent for awhile, and then said, gravely and quietly: "I understand you better, perhaps, than you know, Reinée; but I tell you that the less you indulge such thoughts the better. Forget them and live happy and careless as you did before."

She looked at him with surprise.

"What do you mean, Clive?"

"I mean what I say—forget your dreams and be happy in your butterfly life. Do you think I have never had my hopes—my aspirations? Do you think I have never had dreams of noble purpose or longings after something higher and holier than the life we

lead? Yes, Reinée, I understand you; I have been through it all before; but I have had to give way to circumstances. You know what our home is like, and our mother. God forbid I should judge her; but we both know how she views the questions we have been touching on. She is our mother; she moulds our lives and has done so from the day of our birth, and you know as well as I do what her influence is like. We have been born butterflies, and as butterflies we must live and die; I have striven, and I have had to confess myself beaten, as you will do, if you persist. Take my advice and give up at once; it is much the safest and simplest plan."

Clive spoke with a good deal of suppressed emotion, and Reinée, who had never known him allude to such a subject before, was surprised and moved.

"You never told me, Clive."

"No; men find it difficult to speak, and I was not always at home—home baffled me."

"Clive," said Reinée, suddenly, "I do not think you are quite beaten or baffled. Let us help one another. Do not give way; God is very good; he does not look for impossibilities; he does not wish us to be undutiful or extravagant in what we do. He can help us to live for him, even if we are surrounded

by temptation. He can make our lives holy, and keep us from the evil.

She broke off almost as suddenly as she had begun, wondering at her own confidence in speaking thus: but it seemed as if some assurance of help had been given her to make her brave and steadfast. Clive was silent for a time. His face caught some of the serious gravity of hers, with just a gleam of the light that beamed out of her clear eyes.

Presently he stooped his head and kissed her.

"Little sister," he said, in a low voice not quite like his own, "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

"Oh, Clive!" she cried, half-startled, half-pained, "you know that you are a Christian now, and have been all your life."

"I do not know," he said, quietly. "If by a Christian you mean a follower of Christ, I fear I have often been different."

There was silence for a long time, and then Reinée spoke in a whisper: "Let us follow him together from to-day, Clive."

* * * * *

"Clive," said Mrs. Dumaresq, during dinner that day, "I forget if I told you that I heard from Arthur Trevelyan this morning. He intends being with us by the end of the week."

CHAPTER X.

ARTHUR TREVELYAN.

"BE ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

Reinée closed her Bible and stood quite still, leaning against the window frame and gazing steadfastly over the sea, upon whose broad, shining expanse of waters the opal tints of twilight were beginning to gather.

Reinée was dressed for dinner and had dismissed her maid, as she often did now, for a few minutes before descending; and those few minutes were generally spent by her in quiet, prayerful thought, or in the study of her Bible.

She looked very fair and sweet that evening in her pure, white robes, white blossoms in her hair, and a look of steadfast purpose shining in her eyes. An unusual shade of seriousness and gravity hung about Réinée that evening, for she would have to meet in a few minutes time the man whom her parents wished that she should marry; and who had probably come with the intention of making a formal proposal for her hand, and

of settling definitely for a speedy union. It was this thought that made the girl's face grave and serious; but there was no wavering or indecision in the set of the delicate lips or in the glance of the dark eyes. Difficulty and some trouble and distress might lie before her; but Reinée knew by this time that she would not be left to fight the battle alone; she had learnt where help was to be had and was never asked in vain.

She had closed her Bible and a shade had gathered upon her face, presently she spoke half aloud: "Is Arthur an unbeliever? I cannot tell. I do not wish to judge him; but I am afraid—I am afraid he has no God, save of his own making. I have so often heard him sneer at what is good and true, and speak slightly of those who are living for another world beyond this. I have felt again and again that we were not suited to one another. Now I am sure of it. I would do much to please my mother; but not that—not that."

And with a look of peculiar sweetness and resolution upon her face, Reinée went downstairs and entered the drawing-room.

She was watched rather closely by more than one pair of eyes as she appeared, and met Arthur Trevelyan with a quiet, gracious

self-possession that was at once dignified and simple. Her color had deepened a little, and her eyes were unusually large and luminous. She looked very lovely, and her mother regarded her with satisfied pride, whilst her brother felt that she had a very difficult game to play, and wondered how it would end.

Arthur Trevelyan was a handsome man with a hard face expressive of determination and force of character. It was not a good face, despite its regularity of feature. Its beauty was all external, it lay only surface deep, and was already somewhat marred by the traces wrought upon it by the passions from within. He had been travelling for some time. Reinée had not seen him for nearly a year. She detected at once that he was changed, and that not for the better.

He looked at her steadily as they met, with an air of appropriation that deepened the flush upon her cheek. His long and close acquaintance with the family, and his years of seniority had given him the claim to a familiarity which it was useless now to resent. He had known her as a little child with white frocks and floating hair, and had paid court to her, even then. It was hardly likely he would begin to stand on ceremony now.

"You grow more like your name every year, Reinée," he said, "more queen-like and stately; but it becomes you well. I never wish you other than you are. Tell me, are you glad to see me after this long absence. Is my presence welcome to you?"

He asked the question with a sort of cool confidence, and he did not release the hand he held.

"My brother's friends are always welcome," answered Reinée, looking at him without a trace of self-consciousness. "And especially when they are old friends and known to us all."

He smiled a little as he turned away. He was a man accustomed to his own way, and he did not doubt for a moment his power of breaking down any barrier of reserve so soon as he had a mind to do so.

"Arthur is really exceedingly clever and well-informed," remarked Mrs. Dumaresq, when she and her daughter were alone together after dinner. "I think he improves each time I see him."

Reinée was standing by the long French window that even now stood open to the soft night air.

"Do you?" she questioned, thoughtfully. "I do not think I agree with you."

"You are hardly of an age to judge, my dear. You must accept upon some points the verdict of those older and wiser than yourself. Arthur is a man of very superior parts. I only wish Clive would show indications of as much talent and energy."

"You see, we do not quite agree in our views, mamma," answered Reinée, still speaking quietly and naturally. "I should be very sorry to see Clive grow like Arthur. I want him always his own dear self."

Mrs. Dumaresq looked sharply at her daughter, but she was disarmed by the serenity of Reinée's expression. There was no mutiny or defiance in the sweet face turned towards the moonlight without.

"Ah, you and Clive always stood by one another; but all the same, Arthur is the cleverer man."

"And Clive the better one."

"What do you mean by better?"

"I mean that he has the nobler nature. I could trust Clive's generosity and goodness of heart, his unselfishness and bravery, anywhere, and under any circumstances; but I could not say the same of Arthur."

Mrs. Dumaresq looked slightly displeased, but she laughed lightly as she answered, "You are foolish about Clive—you always

were; but you will do more justice to Arthur when you know him better."

Reinée made no reply, but moved across to the piano, and played softly until she was interrupted by the entrance of the men.

"It's as light as day outside," remarked Trevelyan, approaching the window. "I want to see your garden, Reinée; it looks charming in this light. Come round and do the honors. I have never before seen you occupy the post of *châtelaine* in a house like this."

"The garden is delightful," answered Reinée, slipping her hand within Clive's arm as she stepped out upon the terrace. "We have such lovely views of the sea, as you must have noticed before. If we stay here I mean to be very busy in the autumn making improvements. Clive and I have a great many ideas. I hope papa will buy the house. I have never felt any place quite so like home as this."

"It is not likely to be your home for very long, in any case," remarked Trevelyan, in a low voice; but Reinée made no reply, only that Clive felt her fingers press rather more closely upon his arm.

He came to the rescue by drawing his friend into conversation, and an hour slipped quickly away in rambling about the extensive

grounds of the Hall, and in talking easily and pleasantly of bygone days and old associates.

Reinée presently left the young men to themselves, and slipped off to her own room. Arthur Trevelyan oppressed her somewhat by his air of appropriation. She had never given him the right to exercise it, and she looked upon it as a liberty that he had no right to take.

With all her gentleness and sweetness, Reinée had a good deal of innate pride; and she could be exceedingly dignified and stately when it pleased her. She was quite prepared to hold her own with Arthur Trevelyan, and to show him his place if necessary.

The next day was Sunday—a day that of late Reinée had learned to love and prize very highly, and to keep very differently from the way in which she had been accustomed to see it kept.

Her quiet country Sundays were a source of much comfort and pleasure. The simple, practical teaching of the old rector, followed by the earnest, impassioned eloquence of the young man who had taken his place for a time, had been of immense use to Reinée. No difficulty was made here about her regular and frequent attendance at church, or her visits to her cottage protégés. Mrs. Dumaresq liked

to have her daughter looked up to and admired by high and low, and fancied that there was nothing more than a freak of fancy in the girl's "religious turn." All young things liked change; and this new development was very pretty and becoming, and gave a pleasant popularity to the name of Dumaresq.

All the family, with the exception of Mr. Dumaresq, attended morning service; and Arthur Trevelyan, who never willingly entered a place of worship, swallowed his weariness and *ennui* as well as he could in the pleasure of sitting beside Reinée, and watching her covertly throughout the service. But his restlessness and distaste did not escape her notice. She felt instinctively that he was only here from motives of policy, and she heard him mutter under his breath a word or two of scornful dissent as young Mr. Leslie spoke with peculiar emphasis and eloquence upon the awful danger those were in who idly followed the fashionable doubt and scepticism of the day.

Reinée had a visit to pay on her way home from church to the old blind woman, to whom she read regularly on Sundays and once or twice during the week. Generally, she went in the afternoon, but to-day she feared she might be prevented from doing so, and

determined to take advantage of the present and go on her way home. So she slipped away as the congregation were dispersing, and hoped that her disappearance would be unnoticed.

She had hardly, however, got clear of the church-yard before she found herself joined by Trevelyan.

"Whither away so fast, Reinée? This is surely not the direct way home?"

"No; you must go back and keep up the hill. I am going to pay a visit before I go home."

"You have modified your views, then, Reinée; for, if I remember right, you made a point of paying no visits on Sunday, or receiving them, if you could help. I suppose you have learned at length how inconvenient such Sabbatical rules are?"

He spoke with something of mockery in his tone. Reinée, her mind full of the stirring truths she had just been hearing, answered, quietly and fearlessly: "I am learning more and more to try and keep holy the Sabbath day as we have been bidden to do. You know best whether you are doing the same."

He laughed with careless raillery.

"You see, Reinée, I am more advanced than you, though quite as Scriptural, I assure you.

I hold that the Sabbath was made for man—not man for the Sabbath.”

“Yes,” she answered, turning her clear eyes full upon him, “the Sabbath was made for man, that he might use it as God has appointed, and not abuse it after his own will. You may be quite sure it was not made to be ignored and despised. I know it is not for me to preach. I have been very thoughtless and careless; but I cannot and will not stand by to hear you sneer at such things. If you are determined to be a scoffer, please keep out of my hearing.”

Reinée spoke with her usual quietness, but Trevelyan had never before received such a set down at her hands, and he felt more affronted than he cared to express. He admired the graceful, beautiful girl immensely, but he did not choose to be lectured by her, or to recognise that she looked upon him with disfavor, and set herself up as a judge of his actions. He wished now he had married her when she was younger and more pliable, before she had taken these new notions into her head. However, not much harm could have been done in this short space, and he would lose no more time now.

Reinée had paused before a tiny cottage gate.

"I am going in here. This path will take you up to the Hall."

She was gone before he could answer, and he stood quite still watching her as she walked up the narrow little garden towards the cottage door, in which an old woman was seated listening with a smile of recognition to the light footfalls approaching.

She was evidently quite blind, but she was spotlessly clean and neat, and her face expressed a peace and happiness that many of earth's great ones might have envied.

Trevelyan stood behind a thorn bush for a few minutes to watch. He saw Reinée step inside the cottage and return with a book in her hands. He saw her seat herself upon a bench outside the door, and heard her clear voice begin to read, and then he turned away with a mocking smile upon his face.

At another time he might simply have been rather scornfully amused by this little episode; but just now it annoyed him a good deal more than he cared to own.

"Very pretty and Arcadian, Miss Dumasq," he muttered, as he pursued his way. "Make the most of your liberty whilst you have it; for when you are my wife I will take care there is no sentimental religious philanthropy carried on, on my property. I



"Very pretty and Arcadian," said Trevelyan."

Barbary's Brothers, p. 178.

suppose the silly child, having nothing better to do, has been filling her head with all kinds of parsons' tales, and learning to hold all the world in contempt, save a few of the elect. Well, she is young enough to unlearn all that fast enough, that is one comfort. I must lose no more time though, I can see. I wish I had come to the point earlier."

That same evening he found an opportunity to speak to Mrs. Dumaresq.

Clive and Reinée had gone to church again, as he discovered somewhat to his annoyance when it was too late to stop them. He had, therefore, to content himself with his own society out of doors, or with that of Mrs. Dumaresq within.

Lounging into the drawing-room presently, he threw himself down upon the sofa with a negligent air, and said, half laughing,

"Country air seems to have made Reinée turn very religious, has it not?"

"Oh, no! she has not changed really. It is merely that she takes to church-going, and so on, to fill up the time. I don't wonder at anything. The marvel is that the poor child is not moped to death, shut up in a dull place like this after what she has been used to."

Trevelyan looked somewhat relieved.

"You do not think her changed really?"

"Oh, no, not at all."

"She is as submissive and gentle as ever?"

"Quite, I think. She is a very good girl. If she makes as good a wife as she does a daughter, her husband will win a treasure in her."

"I think so. I am glad to hear you speak so confidently about her."

"Why so?"

"Because I had a suspicion that she might have grown a little *difficile*. She read me quite a homily on the way back from church."

Mrs. Dumaresq smiled with the carelessness of power.

"Reinée will never be any trouble really. I have always been able to manage her without any difficulty. You must not let her feel the curb too much—a man who understands thoroughbred horses will know what I mean by that—guide her without any assumption of power, and never try roughness and hardness: it is gentleness that wins the day with such natures. Oh, you need never be afraid of not managing Reinée, if you only go the right way to work. I will answer for it, you will have no real trouble."

If Reinée's character was giving surprise and uneasiness in some quarters, Wulfrie Meynal

was perplexing his sister Barbara not a little by developments altogether unexpected in him. She had always admired him warmly. She had believed in him, in his cleverness and skill, and his increasing fame did not surprise her. But there was another side to his nature—a side that she saw by glimpses only, which he kept, as it were, hidden away beneath a grave, impassive, rather a hard manner—the existence of which she had never before suspected, and which she watched with a sense of growing perplexity, mingled with loving pride.

Barbara had expected to find in her brother some very much stronger form of her own feelings on many points. The girl had for long indulged in a sort of contemptuous scorn of Gerald's vanity and weakness, and she felt certain that Wulfrie would have less patience than she had with idleness and conceit. Celia, too, came in for a large share of indifference and scorn, and even her mother had not won the meed of affection or respect that a daughter should always bestow upon a parent. Mrs. Meynal was not a very wise woman, and Barbara had never been understood or judiciously managed by her; but there were faults upon the girl's side, too, which she had never been troubled about before.

But now, with Wulfrie's example before her eyes, she began to think somewhat differently. She had quite expected that when he had settled down at home, and had seen for himself the true nature of those about him, he would have scant patience with foibles and follies so foreign to his own disposition, and would join, in his cutting way, in making game of them, and in holding them up to opprobrium and ridicule.

But so far from doing this, Wulfrie was rather himself the butt for the light raillery of others, and he took in perfect good part the sarcasms of his handsome brother and sister, and the fretful complaints of his mother. He never retaliated by a hasty word or an ungenerous comparison. His patience towards his mother was inexhaustible, and he bore all her most trying moods with an unruffled composure that made Barbara marvel. In old days Wulfrie's temper had been said to be exceedingly bad. What, then, had come over him to change it so?

"She is very unwell, Barbara; she does not mean half she says," he said one day, after he had been scolded more persistently than usual by his mother for some imaginary offence. "Her nerves are all unstrung, and the whole world seems going wrong. If I went to all

the dinners and entertainments to which I was asked, she would think the practice was being neglected, and be sadly worried; and because I decline them, she is in terror lest by making myself unpopular I shall come to grief in the future. It is not her fault that she cannot rest, poor little mother. Be very patient with her, Barbara.

"You will spoil Gerald, so that he will never be any good for anything soon," Barbara remarked one day, when she happened to see a shadow cross Wulfrie's face as she observed how much he and Hector Thompson were together. "He does nothing but idle away his time and get into mischief, and you are just as weak with him as father was. It will be the ruin of Gerald."

"You must remember, Barbara, that I have no authority over Gerald."

"Perhaps not; but you could say a great deal more than you do. You let him lord it over you, and never let him know his place as a dependent upon your bounty."

"He is not that exactly, Barbara, and he is my brother also—a fact, by the bye, you seem somewhat in danger of forgetting. Gerald rubs against you the wrong way. I can see that very plainly, but I do not share your sentiments altogether. Gerald and I have had some seri-

ous conversation, and have arrived at a mutual understanding; and if you are of opinion that a constant course of nagging would make a new man of him, I venture to differ from you. Gerald knows my views upon the subject of his career, and when the time comes I shall be prepared to act upon them. Meantime, he must have his fair chance."

Neither could Wulfrie be made to speak harshly of his sister, who certainly gave some cause for anxiety and annoyance by her extravagance, and the quiet obstinacy with which she persisted in being led into close intimacy with a family of not too desirable acquaintances.

"It is not her fault altogether," he would say. "Our mother does not know how unsatisfactory the son and the daughters seem turning out. No doubt the parents were excellent people, and she sees no harm in Celia's visiting the house freely. And if she does not object, it can hardly be expected that Celia will listen to me. We have, unfortunately, neither of us managed to gain an influence over her. That tells a tale, Barbara," he added, with a sort of suppressed sigh. "We need not go about picking holes in other people. There is plenty to amend at home first."

A keen sense of remorse sprang up in Bar-

bara's heart. Perhaps never before had she prayed so earnestly as she did that night against the two besetting sins of which her father had warned her—a hasty temper, and harsh judgments of others. Might she not have had more influence with her sister, had she struggled more earnestly against these foes before? Might she not have been able to save her brother from some portion of the care that now weighed so heavily upon him?

CHAPTER XI.

AN ADVENTURE.

WULFRIC MEYNAL had had a hard day's work amongst his patients. The heat had been oppressive all day, and he was feeling unusually tired as he walked homewards along the edge of the cliff.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening, and the heat was slowly abating. He had been spending the last two hours in visiting on foot some of his poorer patients who lived at a distance from St. Hilda, and now that this work of charity was accomplished, he was leisurely retracing his steps, his mind reverting from time to time, although against his will, to the difficulties and anxieties of his position; and revolving schemes by which he hoped in time to lessen these, and settle down to a greater enjoyment of life than seemed possible at present.

He was presently aware that the lonely cliff path was less lonely this evening than usual. He caught sight of two figures slowly advancing towards him. The graceful girl in white he recognised at once as Miss Dumaresq, and

he presumed that her companion was the brother of whose arrival he had heard, although he had not yet seen him.

But the next moment his thoughts were entirely diverted from the pair in front by the sudden presence of imminent and terrible peril.

He had been vaguely aware for the past few moments of the dull thud of galloping horse-hoofs over the green sweep of the downs that terminated in the precipitous cliffs at whose edge he was walking; and now all in a moment there hove in sight over the ridge of the sloping shoulder a dog-cart driven tandem by a young man unknown to him, whose horses had taken fright, and had bolted; and now, utterly unmanageable and beyond themselves, were heading straight for the cliff, from whose edge they were but five hundred yards distant.

Wulfrie took in the whole situation and its awful peril at a single glance. He was not wont to lose his presence of mind, and danger generally served rather to quicken than to deaden his faculties. In a single instant he had resolved upon his course of action. The horses were charging straight down upon him, but the ground which sloped down from the ridge of the moor rose again somewhat steeply towards the edge of the cliff, thus giving him

a slight advantage. Waving his arms wildly, and uttering a series of unearthly sounds, he rushed furiously towards the leading horse.

This manœuvre produced the desired effect. The creature, terrified by the sight and sound, started, swerved, half paused, and in that moment's pause Wulfrie sprang to its head and seized the bit in a grasp of iron.

What happened then he could not afterwards remember; there was a rearing and trampling, a hideous noise and confusion, and all the breath seemed beaten out of his body, and stars danced before his eyes; but he did not relinquish his grip upon the horse's head; and when at length the tumult subsided, he found himself standing beside the panting leader, whose traces were broken, leaving him free of the cart, whilst the wheeler lay upon the ground, unhurt but exhausted, having slipped upon the smooth, dry turf in the effort to pull up suddenly.

Reinée Dumaresq, as white as death, stood a few yards away trembling in every limb, whilst two young men unknown to Wulfrie were endeavoring to release the prostrate horse.

At that moment the groom came running up. He had prudently dropped off the back seat when the horses headed for the cliff,

and now arrived at the scene of action, in company with one or two men, who had seen something of the accident from the spot where they were working.

The arrival of these assistants seemed to break the spell of silence that the sense of escape from imminent peril appeared to have laid upon the party.

Clive gave some directions to the man and then turned to Wulfrie.

"Are you much hurt?" he asked, anxiously. "I am sure the shaft struck you. I was awfully afraid you would be knocked down and trampled on. The man will take the horse now. Will you let me send for the carriage to take you home? I am awfully afraid you are hurt!"

But Wulfrie, who was quickly recovering from the stunning effect of the shock he had experienced, only smiled in his quiet way.

"I assure you I am not conscious of any injury. I dare say I have got a few bruises and may be stiff for a day or so; but nothing worse. I hope you have come off equally well?"

"I? Oh, yes—you saved me from the necessity of having to hazard a leap. Two minutes later I must have tried it; but I wanted to save the horses, too, if I could. They

owe their lives, however, to you, and I am not sure but that I do the same."

Clive held out his hand, which Wulfrie took in his for a moment. That silent pressure expressed the young man's sense of gratitude better than his words.

"I think," said Wulfrie, with a glance towards Reinée, "that you had better send for the carriage for Miss Dumaresq. It has been too much for her."

But the girl was recovering from her first agitation and terror; and Wulfrie's words brought a flush of color into her white face.

"I would rather walk, thank you," she answered, with a tremulous little smile. "I hardly care to trust myself behind a horse to-day."

"You must come with us, too," said Clive, as he drew his sister's arm within his and led the way onwards. "You must not attempt to walk all the way to your own house until you have had something. You cannot help feeling a bit shaky after that."

Wulfrie would have preferred going straight home, but he was aware that to insist would have appeared ungracious; and, moreover, he was still feeling dazed and shaken and hardly in trim for a two and a half miles' walk. He was fasting and exhausted, and though vexed

with himself for being taken at a disadvantage, was conscious that his best course was to accept the proffered invitation.

So they walked on together four abreast, the young man whom Clive introduced as "my friend, Trevelyan," on Reinée's other side, Wulfric next to the young fellow whose life he had probably saved—the only son of Mr. and Mrs. Dumaresq.

"You have cheated yourself of a patient, Dr. Meynal," said Clive, recovering his natural gaiety as they walked onwards. "I should at least have broken an arm or a leg had I taken the inevitable leap."

"Don't, Clive!" murmured Reinée.

"I am glad to think it is so," answered Wulfric. "I am much too busy to wish to add to my labors. I prefer you sound to broken."

"What a good thing! I was afraid you would be regretting the nice complicated case I might have presented—all chewed up. Now, Reinée, don't shiver so. I am all right, thanks to Dr. Meynal; and all's well that ends well."

"I know," she answered, with a little quiver in her voice; "but I cannot help seeing it all again and again. Ah, Clive, why did you put Firefly in as leader? I told you he was

not safe. He is so nervous—the least thing frightens him.”

“Yes, and I ought to have taken your word for it, only I would have my own way. He took fright at an engine thrashing on Holson’s farm, and there was no holding him after that. Well, Reinée, make your mind easy; I won’t drive him tandem any more.”

They were not long in reaching the Hall, and Wulfrie went upstairs with Clive to remove the traces of the struggle from his dress and person. A great bruise on his temple was beginning to come out, and his head threatened to ache severely before many hours had passed. Nothing, however, would serve Clive but that he should remain to dinner; and he spoke a few words of simple, heartfelt gratitude to the man who had “saved his life,” as he termed it, that pleased Wulfrie more than a more elaborate or ambitious speech would have done. He took to Clive from the first moment of their acquaintance, and for the first time since he had come to St. Hilda, felt that if circumstances allowed, he could make a friend of this young man.

Mr. and Mrs. Dumaresq received him with a good deal of *empressement*, and expressed themselves warmly when they thanked him for the service rendered to their son. Wulfrie

could well have spared these eulogiums on his courage and presence of mind, but he accepted them with his cool, impassive gravity, and turned the conversation as quickly as possible into other channels.

He felt the better for his dinner, and took his part in the conversation with the ease of a well-informed, cultivated man untroubled by self-consciousness or false shame. He was not in the least awed by the stateliness of Mrs. Dumaresq, or the slightly supercilious air adopted by Trevelyan towards the country practitioner. On the contrary, he did not hesitate to enter into an argument with that gentleman on the subject of some new scientific discovery; and he undoubtedly showed himself the more brilliant talker, the better informed man, and, to all appearances, got very much the best of the argument; although after he was safely gone Trevelyan asserted that he had "beaten that impudent young apothecary into a cocked hat," whatever that might signify.

The antipathy between Wulfrie Meynal and Arthur Trevelyan was undoubtedly mutual. Reinée grew hot as she heard the covert sneers levelled at the doctor by a man she considered so much his inferior. In order to effect a diversion, she asked Wulfrie how it chanced

that he came to be walking that way at such a time.

"I suppose you think I ought to have been going about my business, instead of enjoying a walk on my own account, Miss Dumaresq?" he queried, one of his rare smiles lighting his eyes. "But I had not been quite as idle as you might suppose. I had been visiting some patients of mine along the coast."

"I did not know there were any houses out that way," remarked Trevelyan, carelessly.

"Well, I do not know that you would call them houses; but there are plenty of cottages and cabins scattered about."

"Oh—pauper dwelling-places, you mean?"

"Some of them; others inhabited by working people of the poorer kind."

"You are the parish doctor, then?" remarked Trevelyan, with a manner evidently intended to be insolent.

"No," answered Wulfrie, very quietly, "I have not that honor; but I often think if I had time that I should like to undertake the office."

Trevelyan stared. He did not in the least understand the bearing of such a remark, but he fancied it was meant as a set down, and was angry in consequence.

"You have a natural taste for paupers, then?"

"I have a natural taste for hard work, and for combating disease in its worst forms. The ailments of the poor are much more interesting to me, as a rule, than those of the rich, and deserve infinitely more compassion. The patience and gratitude of the poor often strike me as very wonderful. I do not hesitate to confess that they are my favorite patients."

Reinée said nothing, but she looked at him with a sense of undefined sympathy and comprehension, and for a moment their eyes met. Wulfrie smiled very slightly, but neither of them spoke, and shortly afterwards the ladies withdrew.

"That is a very peculiar young man," remarked Mrs. Dumaresq to her daughter, when they were alone together. "As a doctor, I think very highly of him, and we shall always be grateful to him for having prevented a serious accident to-day; but I cannot say I altogether like his manners or opinions. I do not think he would make a suitable companion for Clive."

Reinée made no direct reply. She could not agree with her mother's verdict. She felt she would much rather see her brother

under the influence of Wulfrie Meynal than of Arthur Trevelyan; but it was not for her to say so to her mother, and so without any definite answer she slipped away into the garden.

Presently she heard voices in the drive, and caught the drift of what Clive was saying.

"I'm awfully sorry you have to go so early, Meynal; but if your head is aching, it's no kindness to keep you. I hope you won't be any the worse for it all. I shall not be quite comfortable for a day or two. Sometimes one gets a blow or a twist that turns out an awkward thing after a bit. I shall look round early to-morrow to ask how you are."

The answer was plainly distinguishable.

"Unless I am very much worse than I at all think myself to be, I shall be busy in my surgery long before you are about. Come in some evening if you will. From eight to nine I am generally my own master, but at no other time."

"I'll be sure to come, thanks. Well, good night. You're sure you feel equal to the walk? I'll have the cart ready in five minutes, if you prefer it."

"Thanks, I'd rather walk. Good night; make my adieus to the ladies for me."

But just as he turned after this last farewell, he was confronted by Reinée herself, who had approached under cover of the laurel hedge, and had slipped through a gap and now stood before him.

"Dr. Meynal," she said, holding out her hand and speaking with simple, earnest feeling, "I cannot let you go without thanking you for saving my brother. I had not the chance to do it before. You do not know how very, very grateful I am; but please believe that I shall never forget it—never—never. You risked your life for him; I saw it all."

Wulfrie took the girl's hand, and answered, with quiet gentleness, "I am only too pleased, Miss Dumaresq, to have been of any service to you or yours. For the rest, you think too much of the matter. The danger to myself was much less than you suppose,"

And lifting his hat, he bid brother and sister good-night, and walked away down the dim avenue.

"Clive," said Reinée, turning and putting her arms suddenly about his neck—"oh, Clive, when I think of it all, I do not know how to be thankful enough!"

He held her in his arms, and answered, seriously enough: "Yes; it was a narrow escape,

little sister. I have very much cause for thankfulness."

"He did risk his life, Clive, though he won't admit it. I saw it all; we were quite close. I thought he would be killed when Firefly reared and Gipsy was rushing right upon him. Oh, it was awful! And the edge of the cliff not a hundred yards away!"

"Yes, I thought it was all over for us both for a moment; but his strength saved us."

There was a pause, Reinée was shivering again despite the heat of the night. Presently she whispered a low-toned question: "Clive, do you know that Arthur is a coward?"

"What do you mean, Reinée?"

"I mean what I say. He is a coward, and thinks only of his own safety. He was almost as near as Dr. Meynal when he saw the cart come tearing along, but he did nothing. When Dr. Meynal had seized Firefly, and everything seemed to depend on Gipsy's being stopped he would not move, though we were quite close. 'Go and help,' I cried out to him; but he only said, 'I have no wish to be killed, thank you, like that other fellow,' and there he stood doing nothing. I tried to rush at Gipsy myself, but he held me back. Clive, I don't know how a man

can stand by and see anybody in such danger and not try to help, and that man his friend, too! I think in moments like those one's true nature comes out better than at any other time. I don't know if Arthur knows what he said, or that he betrayed himself to me; but I know him now for a coward."

Clive made no answer. It had not escaped him that his friend had been content to stand by until all real danger was over; but he had not fancied that his sister would have been as clearly aware of this as he was himself.

"And after that he amused himself by sneering at Dr. Meynal at dinner time—at the man who had saved your life, Clive. I always knew that there was something about Arthur that I did not like; but I never knew till to-day what an unworthy man he is. Clive, I hope you will not let him be your friend any longer, even if he has to be an acquaintance."

"You are excited to-night, little sister," said Clive, soothingly; "but, Reinée, you must learn not to judge harsh judgments."

"I will try not," she answered, gravely and more gently, "but it is rather difficult not to think hardly of Arthur Trevelyan to-night."

Did Trevelyan himself know how much he had fallen in Reinée's estimation by his conduct that day?

He was a vain, self-satisfied man, whose good opinion of himself was not easily shaken, and Reinée was too courteous and gentle by nature as well as by training to show hostile or contemptuous feeling by any open or outward sign; and yet as that day drew to its close and the next passed swiftly by, and Trevelyan got no speech of her, and failed to increase by any single small degree the intimacy that he was pleased to consider existed between them, an uncomfortable sense arose in his heart, that perhaps all was not well, and he determined to out-manceuvre the queenly maiden who contrived to avoid him without the least appearance of effort.

Of course, when his mind was made up, and he was bent upon an interview, she could not hinder it. She had no reason to fear Trevelyan's power over her. She did shrink a little, sometimes, from interviews with her mother, feeling bound by filial obedience to respect her words and wishes to a certain point at least; but with her lover she felt strong—stronger than he knew—stronger than he did himself.

He sought her out in the garden as she was tending her flowers. He began to talk to her in easy, pleasant fashion of one thing and another, bringing the subject round, as was his wont, to himself and his own adventures and

exploits. Trevelyan, as has before been stated, had a clever way of boasting without appearing to do so; but on this occasion Reinée was disposed to be more critical than usual.

She raised herself from her flowers presently and looked him full in the face, her clear eyes expressing a certain fine incredulity not unmingled with scorn.

"If you are so very brave in other places, Arthur, and expose yourself so readily to danger for the sake of strangers, I wonder that you were content to stand by idle and useless when Clive was nearly killed before your eyes two days ago."

The words were quietly and steadily spoken, with the direct simplicity characteristic of Reinée. Trevelyan shrank from the glance of her eyes, and then laughed uneasily.

"I was too late, unfortunately," he said.

"You were not too late," she answered. "You arrived at the critical moment; and you stood by taking care of your own safety, whilst a stranger risked his life to save that of the man you call your friend."

Trevelyan ground his teeth together; but he did not know how to answer the charge. Reinée had actually been upon the spot. It was useless to tell her that facts were otherwise than she had believed. He was intensely

annoyed at being taken at a disadvantage and called to account like this; but there was nothing to be done at such a moment but to humble himself and try to make peace as well as he was able. He must not lose Reinée through a trifling accident like that. How was it she had come to be so clear sighted and penetrating all at once? Why did she not take him on trust and believe in him as she had done years ago?

"Reinée," he said, trying to take her hands, but failing, for she withdrew herself a pace or two from him, "I know that you must despise me for a coward, but can you make no allowance for the freezing sense of horror that comes over a man sometimes in moments of deadly peril? Had it been any one but Clive—my friend—my almost brother, who had been concerned, I could have rushed to his rescue; but it was Clive himself, and the horror of the moment was so great that I was paralysed—I could do nothing. It was weak, it was womanish; but surely you can understand, you can forgive."

Reinée's clear glance expressed a deepening scorn, her delicate lips curled involuntarily.

"I do understand, I am afraid, only too well," she answered, quietly. "Do you think I have forgotten how you looked or what you

said? There was no trace of agitation about you then. You were cold and calm and master of yourself. I think a man's true nature comes out in moments like those, and I am glad I was there to see for myself. I think I should hardly have believed, had I been told afterwards, that you had stood idly by whilst Clive had been nearly killed.

Trevelyan's face was rather pale—pale with passion and baffled rage.

"And in point of fact you consider the truth to be that I am a coward?"

She looked at him steadily.

"Does it not look like it?"

He bit his lip angrily.

"Or, at least," she added, more gently, "I cannot help feeling that a brave, true man, like Clive or—Dr. Meynal, never could have hesitated—as you did."

Trevelyan sneered fiercely.

"Oh, if you are going to set up a beggarly, country apothecary as an example to me, I think it is time I was going."

She looked at him quietly for a few seconds, and turned and walked away. He called her name once or twice; but she did not even turn her head. He felt he had got the worst of the argument.

CHAPTER XII.

SPEAKING OUT.

JULIET GRANBY was walking home from a visit to Reinée Dumaresq in a peculiarly dissatisfied frame of mind.

She had begun to find that her new friend was not at all inclined to enter into her lofty ideals and high-flown aspirations. Reinée seemed to enjoy pottering about dirty cottages and visiting uninteresting poor people as much as Mrs. Granby enjoyed training her young maids, and looking after every detail of the spotless home that Juliet was growing to despise and dislike. Perhaps old women always did grow more or less childish, but what could have made the beautiful, high-born Reinée so tiresome and tame? Juliet rebelled sorely against her lot. Everybody seemed to fail her. Was she never to get beyond the narrow limitations of this little neat house and garden, or the control of a grandmother, who appeared to her to have no thoughts beyond her pigs and poultry, and a low, poor people.

A mind that could be so engrossed in mat-

ters of this kind could never aspire to any higher flights—so Juliet told herself again and again and with increasing emphasis. She herself had a nature that soared far above the region of such trivialities, and yet she was not happy; and on this particular afternoon she was more than usually dissatisfied.

When she reached home, she hurried for consolation to her books, and was deep in the biographies of notable women, when the bell summoned her to the substantial eight o'clock supper-tea, a meal to which she had a great aversion, always wishing Mrs. Granby to substitute for it a late dinner.

She did not hurry down, and when she reached the dining-room, she found her tea poured out, her plate supplied, and Mrs. Granby already engaged with her meal.

"I knew that you were in, my dear, so I did not wait. Can you not try to be a little more punctual? I hope you have had a pleasant afternoon?"

"Pretty well," was the not very gracious answer, and Juliet began to eat in silence, the shade upon her face deepening each moment.

"I had a visit from Mr. Leslie this afternoon," said Mrs. Granby. "He gives but a poor account of Mr. Sargent; but I was

pleased with the young man himself. He spoke with a great deal of proper feeling. I was pleased, too, by what he told me of Wulfrie Meynal. He seems to be making himself an invaluable friend amongst the poor. Barbara, too, is helping him. I had heard something of her work from herself; but Mr. Leslie's independent testimony was of still greater interest. I have always felt that Barbara Meynal had in her the making of a very fine character."

But Juliet hardly listened. She had more important concerns on her mind than anything her grandmother could find to discuss. After a long silence she laid down her knife and fork, pushed away her plate, and burst out with great vehemence: "Grandmother, I can stand it no longer. This place is killing me!"

It was by no means the first time Mrs. Granby had heard such an assertion, and she answered, quietly: "Well, my dear, where do you wish to go?"

"To London!" cried the girl, excitedly. "To some great city where life is life—not a miserable stagnant vegetation that stifles the soul, and crushes the mind. I am being starved here—absolutely starved! I will go to London, if it is only as a governess!"

"My love, you are not suited to be a governess," said Mrs. Granby, gently.

Juliet tossed her head with some indignation.

"You think I do not know enough?"

"I was not thinking of your book-knowledge. You may be qualified there, although you must remember that a wide range of desultory reading does not necessarily make an educated woman, and the rudiments of learning you always despised, wishing to run before you could walk, as seems to be the fashion of the age. But the intellectual difficulty is not the one of which I was thinking."

Juliet had flushed a little under the criticism her grandmother had just uttered; but it was too true to be denied. Rather hastily she asked: "What other difficulty can there be?"

"One or two rather serious ones, as it appears to me, my dear. Those who are entrusted with the care of the young, and undertake their management, require to have a steady control over their own tempers, or they will never control their pupils. Very great patience and self-possession are absolutely essential in the management of children. I doubt if you are sufficiently qualified on either of these points."

"Oh, it is not your fault, grandmother," answered Juliet, struck by a little contrition. "You have always been kind. It is the place that is in fault—the whole atmosphere of it. I must live a wider life; I must have a larger sphere. Some strangers were at Mrs. Dumarques's at tea-time this afternoon. They were saying that there must be a European war before long. I wish it might break out soon. I would go directly then."

"What to do?"

"Why, to nurse the sick and wounded, of course—like Florence Nightingale."

Mrs. Granby smiled a little.

"And what do you know of nursing, to start with?"

"Oh, I should learn directly I got there. One can do almost anything under the pressure of necessity and excitement, you know."

"Those can do a great deal who know what should be done and how to do it," answered the old lady, quietly. "But the battle-field is not generally considered the place to learn the rudiments of nursing, nor do they fill the ambulances with untrained and enthusiastic girls."

"Oh, I could soon get a little training. I should learn anything of that sort very quickly. There need be no difficulty there, if that is all."

Mrs. Granby sat silent for a few minutes, and then said, "If you are really in earnest in your wish to learn something of nursing, I will certainly do what I can to forward the plan."

This was not, perhaps, the scheme that appealed the most to Juliet; but then if there should be war, she would love to go to the front, and the only chance of getting leave to do this would be by training herself beforehand. Juliet was convinced that she had it in her to be a second Florence Nightingale, and the prospect of any change was pleasant to her.

"What could I do to learn?" she asked. "Where could I go?"

"I am not sure that you need go anywhere. I could teach you a good deal myself, if you really wished to learn; and Barbara Meynal and her brother, I do not doubt, could find you work and give you instruction."

Juliet's face fell instantly.

"No, thank you, grandmother, that is not the sort of thing I want. If I go in for nursing, I shall do so in a thorough, practical fashion. I shall either let it alone altogether, or go into a hospital and learn it there."

Mrs. Granby sat silent for some time wrapped in thought.

"Hospital life is very hard, Juliet. The hours are long, early rising and punctuality are

essential, as well as prompt obedience and strict attention to orders. I am not at all sure that you would like it."

Juliet looked roused and eager.

"Do you really mean that you would let me try it, grandmother?"

"I must think it over; but if your heart is set on it, if you feel really wishful for a proper medical and surgical training, I am disposed to give you your own way. I am not indifferent to your happiness, my dear; it troubles me that you cannot be content with your life. When you have suggested plans before, they have been too wild and impossible to entertain seriously for a moment; but this idea of entering a hospital is less chimerical."

"Where do you think I could go?" asked Juliet, eagerly, "to London?"

"No, London is too far away. I could not have you at such a distance, where I could hardly ever see you or satisfy myself as to your well-being. Besides, I believe it is rather an expensive thing entering as a lady probationer at a London hospital. If you are really in earnest over your wish, I suppose you will not mind 'roughing it' a little?"

"Not at all," answered Juliet, quickly; "I would rather go on my own merits, as it were, and work my way up from the bottom."

She felt a little contempt for the very expression "lady probationer," and was by no means disposed to swell that band.

Juliet had, as has been implied before, a very great opinion of her own powers. She felt certain that if she once had full scope, her talents, her energies, together with her gentle birth, would soon make her a power and an influence in whatever kind of work she took up.

She did not want to go to a hospital where there were a number of ladies—girls of her own station—at work already. She much preferred the idea of entering as an ordinary untrained nurse, and of shining above all her companions by her capacity, her skill and her general quickness and force of character. Mrs. Granby did not know what thoughts were fermenting in her brain; but she was relieved to find that her granddaughter was not as resolutely set upon going to London as she fancied she might be.

"There is the County Infirmary," remarked Mrs. Granby. "I believe the nursing there is very good: and it is not more than twenty miles away. I could come and see you occasionally. I will speak to Wulfrie Meynal about it. He knows the place. I believe he goes there occasionally in some capacity or other. I fancy he lectures from time to time

to the medical school. He will be the best person to consult."

So for the present the conversation dropped, and Juliet, feeling that a crisis in her life was at hand, went away to dream of her unexpected success, and of an ideal hospital life that was to transform her at once into a sort of full-blown heroine.

Wulfrie Meynal when consulted told Juliet plainly that the work would be hard and monotonous; but he relaxed a little when he saw that her mind was made up, and undertook to make arrangements for her to enter the County Infirmary (where he gave lectures every month) at the earliest opportunity. He gave her a few words of excellent counsel, to which she paid but little heed, as was her way, and he left her in a state of triumphant exultation that was rather intoxicating.

Barbara was her main confidante during the next days. The girls had not seen so much as usual of each other since the time of one had been so much more occupied, but the sympathy of a common purpose drew them together now, and led to the interchange of many thoughts.

That is to say, Juliet talked away more eloquently than ever—more than ever certain

that a great future lay before her. Her companion had much less to say on her side, and though she gave sympathy and encouragement to Juliet, and tried to avoid forming a hasty judgment, she did wonder a little if a plan whose soul and centre seemed to be self would be likely to turn out very happily or well.

Barbara was silent about her own theories of life, because she felt that they wanted enlarging and modifying. Her old ideas were not sufficient for her. She felt the need of something deeper and wider. She often wished to talk to Wulfrie about it, but a sort of shyness held her silent. She had grown more intimate with her brother since she had become his assistant and fellow worker, but there were some subjects that she still hesitated to broach.

But an evening came when a favourable chance seemed to present itself.

It was the day following the narrow escape that Clive Dumaesq had had of a serious accident—perhaps of death itself. He had called to ask after Wulfrie, and had seen Barbara, who heard from his lips the story about which her brother had been quite silent.

The tale did not lose in effect by Clive's

telling of it, and all that day Barbara went about with a sense of deep thankfulness at her brother's narrow escape; and with an admiration of his coolness and bravery, that wrought her up to an enthusiasm about him which she knew she must not let him see.

She had, however, the unusual pleasure that day of having more of his company than usual, for he came home about six o'clock with a racking headache, due to the effects of the blow on his head, and was altogether so stiff and bruised that he was glad to lie down upon the sofa in his study, and let Barbara wait upon him with that quiet, trained skill that she had lately learned.

Rest and quiet, and strong tea, soon produced a beneficial effect upon him. He enjoyed a couple of hours sound sleep, and awoke to pronounce himself quite recovered, save from a little stiffness that a hot bath would remove.

Barbara, however, would not hear of his rising or attempting any work that night, and he submitted to her dictum, and indulged himself with a long rest, a thing he had not done for months; and she sat beside him and told of Clive's visit, and the story he had related, and asked for her brother's account of the adventure.

Wulfrie's story was very slight; he had caught hold of a horse and stopped it, and got a bruise or two; but he had nothing to say of his own prowess. It might have been the most ordinary affair in the world from his account. Barbara felt all the prouder of him for his unconsciousness of any heroism; but she could not help saying: "You must have known that you might have been killed."

"Well, we may all be killed every time we walk out or do anything. There is more or less of danger all round us; it is only a question of degree."

"And the degree there was imminent."

"I don't know. I am very strong, and there was another man close by, ready to lend a hand. I dare say, if the truth were known, he did as much as I; but I couldn't see really what happened."

"Mr. Dumaresq said nothing about anybody else. He only spoke of you."

"There was another fellow, though—a friend of young Dumaresq's. He was certain to have lent a hand, too. Any way, it's all right. I kept out of harm's way, and the less fuss you make about it the better."

Barbara knew what this hint meant.

"Wulf," she said, after a long pause, "does death seem to you a very dreadful thing?"

It was easier to ask this question in the twilight dimness of the room than it would have been at any other time. She could not see her brother's face clearly, only the outline of his tall figure as he lay upon the couch with his hands clasped behind his head.

"Do you wish for a personal answer to that question, Barbara? Do you want to know my own feelings about it?"

"Yes, Wulf."

There was a short silence, and then the young man answered, quietly and composedly, "Personally, there is nothing dreadful to me in the idea of death."

"You mean you would not be afraid of it?"

"That is my meaning."

"But you have seen many people who are?"

"Undoubtedly. You know there are two causes for the fear of death, one much commoner than the other."

"What do you mean?"

"I am speaking of the natural physical shrinking from death and clinging to life, which we all share to a greater or less extent. In some cases it amounts almost to a horror of dying, yet in nearly every case in the actual approach and presence of death it passes entirely away. The sense of spiritual fear is a very different thing. We do not see it very

often. Generally the senses are hardened or deadened at the last, and physical exhaustion saps away all sense of mental terror; but from time to time it is there, and teaches us its own lesson."

Barbara was silent for a while, and then she said, "Wulf, I believe I should be afraid to die."

"Why?"

"I hardly know how to say it; I am not good enough; I am not ready."

"And how much goodness do you think you need to make you ready?"

Barbara was silent, twisting her hands together; she was uncertain how to make her meaning clear.

"You know what people say, Wulf, 'that they are not fit to die.' That is just what I feel."

"And how do you propose to make yourself fit?"

Barbara was silent.

"Wulf," she said, after a pause, "you are not afraid; why is it that you feel different from me?"

"Perhaps if I were relying on my own fitness and goodness or readiness I might feel as you do, Barbara."

She sat very still in the gathering darkness,

and then asked, softly, "What is it you trust in, Wulf?"

"Have you been reading your Bible, Barbara?"

"Yes, a little; a good deal sometimes; but I don't think I know how to find the places I want—I don't seem to learn what other people do."

"No? Then you must look again for the answer to your own question."

"Won't you tell me, Wulf?"

"What am I to tell you? I think you know it all as well as I—that there is One upon whom has been laid the iniquity of us all; One who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, by whose stripes we are healed. He was good—fit and ready to die; but he does not expect it of us."

"But he expects something, Wulf?"

"Yes, our faithful and loving service. He expects that, and that we must give—all the rest may safely be left to him."

Wulfrie spoke very quietly and coolly, not in the least as if he were dealing with sacred subjects. There was no hesitation or shamefacedness in his manner, no bated breath or slurring over the words he uttered. What he said he evidently spoke from settled conviction and was not ashamed to express. He never

introduced such subjects into conversation, but when pressed by his sister, he gave her his opinions without hesitation.

"And it is all real to you, Wulf? Of course, I have heard it all again and again, but somehow it has never come home to me. Is it all real to you?"

"Yes, Barbara. I advise you to have done with all those shilly-shally ways of taking things on trust because you are afraid to doubt, yet are not prepared to investigate their truth and find out what you really do believe. Nothing good can ever come of that sort of thing. If you believe, believe with your whole understanding and mind and spirit: if you do not—at least, know yourself for a doubter, and do not hug yourself upon sharing a creed that is in reality nothing to you."

Wulfrie had said his say and now lapsed into silence.

Barbara sat still for some time in deep thought; and then bid him good-night and went quietly away. He lay quietly where he was, revolving many things in his mind, and he must have fallen asleep unawares, for when he awoke the moon was waning and the chill of the early morning had stolen through the open window.

The sound that had aroused him was the

opening of the front door, and as he rose and struck a light he saw that it was two hours past midnight. His limbs were cramped and stiff, and he felt desperately tired. He made his way to the door, expecting to meet Gerald on his way upstairs, for it was evidently he who was coming in so late.

But when he reached the hall, there was his brother leaning against the door, rather as if somebody had propped him up against it and he had remained where he was placed because he had not power to move. One glance was enough to tell Wulfrie what was the matter—his brother was partially intoxicated.

Weary and unfit as he was for the exertion, there was nothing to be done but for him to get Gerald to bed as quickly and quietly as possible, and it was with a very heavy heart that Wulfrie laid himself down at length for the few hours' rest that remained to him.

He began to feel that the burden he had taken upon himself was almost more heavy than he could well bear; and the question for which he could find no answer haunted him throughout the night.

"What was to be done about Gerald?"

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. MEYNAL TAKES ALARM.

"ALL I know is that this sort of thing never happened in your dear father's life-time. If he could keep Gerald straight, why cannot Wulfrie?"

Mrs. Meynal was the speaker, and she uttered these words in that tone of plaintive irritability that was growing more and more common with her. Wulfrie was seated opposite to her, his face grave and set, and a look of care and weariness in his eyes that there had not wont to be, even during the hardest days of his student life.

Barbara and Celia were also present, the latter calmly indifferent as it seemed to what was going on, the former keenly alive to every word that passed, her flushed face and the nervous movements of her hands betraying a subdued tumult of feeling within her.

She had been silent for a good while; but now at these last words she seemed constrained to speak. She did so, however, with much more of gentleness than would have been possible to the Barbara of three months back.

"Mother," she said, quickly, rather in the tone one would assume towards a fretful, wayward child, "how can Wulf help what Gerald does? You know he will never listen to advice from any one. He only laughs at it and does just as he chooses."

"I am not talking about advice," answered Mrs. Meynal, peevishly. "I am speaking of influence. Why has not Wulfrie a proper influence over his brother?"

"Now, mother," cried Barbara, unable to keep quite as calm as she wished, "do you not see how unreasonable you are? Why should Wulf be expected to have all the influence when we have none?"

"You talk like a child, Barbara, and you worry me by your folly. You ought to know that it is men who are able to influence men. Mothers and sisters never count for anything with young men."

"I am afraid Gerald is not very easy to influence," remarked Wulfrie, speaking for the first time since his mother had begun upbraiding him.

"Then you are quite wrong," answered Mrs. Meynal, with some sharpness, "and it shows how little you care for or understand your brother. Your dear father was always saying how easily Gerald was led. He used to be

quite anxious about him, because he was so susceptible to influence."

Barbara was about to speak with something of triumphant vehemence; but a glance from Wulfrie checked her, together with a sense of the utter impossibility of ever making her mother understand the real drift of such a remark.

"I must do what I can about it," said her brother. "I will do my best to influence him; but you see I do not know Gerald very well. I have been little at home, and we have grown apart."

"Yes, that is just what I always said would happen, if you were indulged in your headstrong fancies. If you had been a dutiful son, Wulfrie, you would have come back years ago as your father's assistant, and then, perhaps, he would not have had to work himself to death as he did at the last. I always said no good would come of your setting up to be a greater man than your dear father; but he would indulge you in every possible way—and that was the result—and this."

And Mrs. Meynal put her handkerchief to her eyes and wiped away some tears.

Wulfrie, worn out in body and mind with hard work, lack of sleep, and anxiety, was little fit to bear the additional burden of

reproaches like these. He shrank even now from mention of his father's death: he had loved his father with the strong, tenacious fidelity of his nature, had strained every nerve in his upward progress to please and satisfy the parent who was watching his career with a proud appreciation and satisfaction; and the thought that his father had died whilst he was away in a distant land, always filled him with a keen sense of pain that had never left him ever since he had heard the news. Therefore, reproaches such as these were peculiarly painful, and not the less so on account of their irrational injustice.

Barbara, who had an instinctive insight into some of his feelings, quickly interposed.

"Mother, dear, do not speak so. It is not just, and it is very unkind. Father was never over-worked at all, and he died from the effect of a chill—it was not even in visiting a patient that he took it, you know; but with driving over to dine at the Croft. It was his doing, more than any one's, that Wulf always stayed away. He was so proud of his success in London."

"Well, I'm sure I never said he was not, though I never saw anything to be so very proud of; but I'm only a woman, and, of course, nobody cares what I feel. I always

did say that a son's place was at home, and I kept Gerald here; I would have my way about him—and any one can see what a dear, clever boy he is. But Wulfrie never cared for any of us, and always would go his own way, and now, when his influence might have been some use with his brother, it turns out that he has none, all because he would be so headstrong and undutiful, and neglect everything but his own ambitious projects that I know will never come to anything."

Barbara bit her lips. Wulfrie sat quite still for a while, and presently looked up to say, "The trouble with Gerald is not simply that I have too little influence, although that is true enough; but that other people have too much."

Celia looked up at that, appearing for the first time to be roused to interest.

"Who do you mean by 'other people?'" she asked, with some sharpness.

Her brother looked rather keenly at her as he answered, "Well, Hector Thompson for one."

Celia tossed her head and a flush mantled her cheek.

"Our father was very intimate with the Thompsons. He did not mind how much Ger-

ald went there: but you are much too grand, it seems, to recognise any merit in our friends."

Wulfric ignored the taunt.

"By what I understand, this Hector has been away from St. Hilda for many years. When my father sanctioned Gerald's going there, he was not at home."

"Much you know!" cried Celia, with some contempt, but Barbara answered, quietly, "Hector had not been settled a month at home before father died."

"Just so," returned Wulfric, coolly, "and there would be nothing to find fault with in Fergus or his associates. The thing is explained at once."

Mrs. Meynal was looking from one speaker to the other in a sort of bewilderment.

"I don't know what you are all talking about. The Thompsons are very nice people, I am sure."

"Wulf does not think them good enough for him," answered Celia, scornfully.

"Wulf knows that Hector is leading Gerald into mischief," retorted Barbara, with indignation.

"Dear, dear, dear," said poor Mrs. Meynal, with a weary sigh, "I cannot understand why all these troubles come. They never used to do before Wulfric came home. I'm sure Hec-

tor always seems a very nice young man, so attentive and polished. What is it you see to dislike in him? I suppose you are jealous of him at the bottom?"

"I am afraid his tastes are fast, and that he is leading Gerald into mischief."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because he is out so much at night, and is so late home; because I know they play at cards or billiards and because of the condition in which Gerald came home last night."

The quietness and firmness with which Wulfrie spoke seemed to alarm his mother.

"And if you know of all this, why don't you interfere to stop it?"

"It is not very easy to stop Gerald when his mind is set upon a thing."

Mrs. Meynal began to wring her hands.

"Oh, what will become of us? I am the most miserable woman on earth! Wulfrie, you must speak to Gerald. You must tell him that such things cannot be allowed. You must be severe with him—severity is necessary sometimes, your dear father used to say so. You must put a stop to it once for all. I cannot have it, and I look to you to stop it."

"I will do all I can," answered Wulfrie. "Whether Gerald will heed me is another matter."

"You must make him heed," cried poor Mrs. Meynal, whose sensitive nervous system was thoroughly on edge now. "Why, he may ruin us all in a night if he takes to gambling like those people we hear of at Monte Carlo. I shall never rest in my bed till it is stopped. Wulfric, you must be firm; you must be very firm. If one thing doesn't do, you must try another. You must make him promise never to do so again, even if you have to threaten to turn him out of the house."

"I am not sure that threats will do much good," remarked Wulfric.

"Oh, yes, they will!" cried Mrs. Meynal. "Do you think I do not know Gerald's character after all these years? You must threaten, if other means fail. You must tell him that I cannot have him in the house any more. That will bring him to his senses, if nothing else will. Mind you don't forget, Wulfric; you must tell him that I cannot have him in the house—or rather that you cannot—I desire it shall be said, if necessary."

There was no time for a reply, for the door was suddenly opened, and the servant announced "Mr. Leslie."

The young clergyman was tolerably well-known to the Meynals by this time. There was some very distant kinship between them,

and he had taken from the first a great liking for Wulfrie, and had watched him with increasing admiration and respect. He often dropped in for half-an-hour when his day's work was done, and he was always kindly welcomed by Mrs. Meynal, who liked to see people about her, and was gentle in her manner towards almost every one save her eldest son; but to-night as he appeared she looked up almost fretfully, and said: "Oh, how do you do, Mr. Leslie? I am pleased to see you, of course; but I did hope that it was my son Gerald coming in."

"I have brought you a message from him instead," answered the young man, as he shook hands all round and sat down beside Celia. "I have just met him. He was on his way to the railway station."

"To the railway station?"

"Yes; he was with young Mr. Thompson and another gentleman I did not know. They seemed in a great hurry. Your son stopped to ask me to tell you that he was off for a few days—possibly for a week. They had just made up their minds to go for a little outing, and he had not time to come back and tell you. He asked me to leave the message. I suppose he will write and tell you more himself."

Mrs. Meynal looked helpless and distressed. Wulfrie drew his brows together, and leaned his head upon his hand as he stood with his elbow on the carved mantelpiece and his head slightly turned away. He knew quite well that there was to be some horse-racing in a town about twenty miles off, and he had little doubt but that his brother had gone there. He had been half afraid before that he would do so; but as days had passed by and nothing had been said, he had begun to hope that all was well, until this message reached them. Nobody else present was aware of the racing, but after the foregoing conversation, Mr. Leslie's communication was anything but welcome.

"Oh, dear, dear!" sighed Mrs. Meynal, "whatever shall we do? I do hope he will not go and get into mischief. I have just been made so miserable about him. They tell me he is getting into bad company; yet not one of them raises a hand to keep him back."

And Mrs. Meynal, in her rambling, discursive, incoherent way, began telling the young clergyman of her troubles. Wulfrie took this opportunity to make his escape to the work that was waiting for him in his study; but Barbara stayed, anxious to explain away any incautious statements her mother

might make, and Mr. Leslie listened with great attention and sympathy. He expressed himself with great good feeling on the subject of Gerald's delinquencies, and so soothed Mrs. Meynal that the painful impression made upon her began to subside, and she was able to compose herself to her usual evening nap.

Then Frank Leslie turned towards Celia and said, gently, "I should think that your influence with your brother might be the strongest power that could be brought to bear upon him. He surely would not lend himself to a course of action that must lower him in your sight."

Celia looked very lovely that night, as, indeed, she generally did, and her beauty was heightened by the slight color that flushed her cheeks in the consciousness that she was being admired. Barbara sometimes wondered whether her sister was really as apathetic and vacant as she sometimes appeared to be; or whether, perhaps, her soul was only slumbering, and would some day be roused into a life it had not known before. To look lovely and to win admiration had so far appeared to be the aim and object of her life; but surely there were possibilities of greater things beneath so fair an exterior.

At any rate, Frank Leslie thought so—that was plain enough for all to see.

Celia made no answer to his proposition save by a little smile, and her companion turned the conversation.

"Have you thought over what I spoke about to you the other day?" he asked.

"Oh, I told you at the time, didn't I, that I did not care about that sort of thing?"

"Yes; but I hardly took that for an answer."

"Why not?"

"Because we all of us have to do what we do not like at some time in our lives."

"Oh, yes, of course; but that is different from doing it with our eyes open when we need not trouble ourselves about it. I hate trouble."

Mr. Leslie smiled, but did not appear disconcerted.

"But you like giving pleasure to others?"

"I don't think I care about it unless it gives pleasure to me at the same time."

"And I am certain that if you were once to try, you would find that in the giving of pleasure to others you would gain it for your self."

Celia shrugged her shoulders a little, but she was not altogether displeased at being regarded as so amiable a being.

"People always say that, of course; but nobody else believes them."

"They believe it themselves—and possibly they know best, as you may find if you will only try."

Celia made a little *moue*.

"Well, what is it you want me to do? In what way must I victimise myself for your precious parish and people?"

"They are not mine, Miss Meynal, they are God's people, and in a certain sense they belong to you as well as to me."

The sudden gravity and earnestness with which these words were spoken checked the levity with which Celia had felt inclined to treat the whole subject.

"Well, tell me what you want, then. Perhaps I will think about it."

"I only want you to visit every week that home for the indigent blind on the other side of the town, and read to them for an hour or so. Poor things, they have had hardly anything done for them ever since their patron Mr. Stuart died and his family removed, and their lives are so sadly monotonous. I want to get a lady visitor for every day of the week to go and see them and read to them and cheer them up a little. You do not know what it would be to them. Will you take one day, Miss Meynal? I know your sister's time is taken up, but you say yourself that you have

no occupations. Will you not help the poor and needy by one little act of self-sacrifice?"

"Oh, dear, Mr. Leslie, what a sermon to preach about such a little thing! Will you promise me if I say 'yes' about this not to worry me about anything else?"

He smiled a little and was silent.

"You won't? Well, I call that too bad. It would serve you right if I said 'no' straight off. Have you got any other people for the other days?"

"Yes, Mrs. Granby has promised to take one day. I went to ask her granddaughter; but found she proposed going into a hospital to learn nursing, and the old lady said she would go until I got so many younger volunteers that I could afford to dispense with her services. Then Mrs. Dart, the solicitor's wife, will take one day, and Miss Dumaresq, from the Hall, another. I hope soon to get every day supplied."

"Reinée Dumaresq seems very fond of good works," remarked Celia. "I can't understand it in any one brought up as she has been."

Frank Leslie smiled a little.

"I think bringing up has less to do with it than disposition and heart; but you have not given me your answer, Miss Meynal."

"Oh, I suppose I shall have to go; but

what I shall say when I get there I cannot imagine. You will soon be begging me to discontinue my visits."

Mr. Leslie looked at her again with a smile that was not exactly one of assent.

Celia did go—why she could hardly have told, unless because it was easier to do so than to be always saying "no" to the young clergyman. She did not expect to be at all interested in the people, and she was not very much; still their patient helplessness did touch her somewhat, and her visits to them led to other encounters that interested her more than the people themselves.

She came across Reinée Dumaresq on several occasions, and as she was an intimate friend of Barbara's, it seemed natural that a certain amount of intimacy should be taken for granted between these two. Reinée would sometimes call for Celia in her pretty pony carriage, and drive her to the home upon her visiting days, and would talk to her of the blind people and what might be done for them in a way that showed how personal was the interest she took in each one, and how fully she believed that her companion did the same.

Celia felt it impossible, somehow, to tell Reinée of her indifference upon subjects, and from appearing interested in these plans she

began to feel a faint stirring of genuine compassion and willingness to second them.

Mr. Leslie would sometimes be appealed to for advice by Reinée, who generally included Celia in her projects, and the young clergyman's face would light up with pleasure as his eyes rested upon the two girls, and something in the manner or in the look of his face betrayed a good deal of his mind to the quick perceptions of Miss Dumaresq.

"I think Mr. Leslie is a very good man," she once said to Celia.

"Yes, I suppose so. Clergymen ought to be."

"There is a difference in them," answered Reinée, smiling. "I like Mr. Leslie very much."

Celia colored slightly.

"Do you?" she said, indifferently. "I suppose he means well. He is a little oppressive sometimes, I think. It seems to me it is the fashion just now to be like that. I do not fancy it is a fashion I shall ever follow. I like to take my ease."

Reinée looked thoughtful for a moment and then said: "You may get tired of that some day."

"Perhaps; I doubt it, though. I know you were tired of gaiety when you came here and took up country life with great zest; but I

expect when you are married and plunge back into the vortex again, you will enjoy it all the more, and wonder how you could have left it."

It was Reinée's turn to color now.

"I am not likely to be married," she said, quietly.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," answered Celia, quickly, "but everybody said you were engaged to that handsome Mr. Trevelyan who stays with you so much."

"I am not engaged to him," answered Reinée, "and I do not think I ever shall be."

Celia looked perplexed and almost incredulous, and Reinée added, after a short pause, speaking rather fast: "When I was much younger my parents entered into a sort of provisional engagement on my behalf; but now that the time has come for me to judge for myself, I cannot ratify it."

"I suppose I must not ask why not?"

Reinée glanced at Celia, and saw that the question was not put in mere idle curiosity, she, therefore, answered with frank simplicity and truthfulness.

"I will tell you—I know you will not talk about it. Arthur Trevelyan is a man who—who has different ideas of life, of right

and wrong, of almost everything from mine. I want to try and follow—however far behind it must be—in Christ's footsteps upon earth. He would not help me in that. He might even—no—I will not say that; it is not for me to judge him. But I could never marry a man whose inner life I could not share. You understand me Celia, do you not?"

Celia answered "Yes," but the answer was low and uncertain. Did she understand, she asked herself as she walked in the garden that evening? Did she know what it was to put considerations of that kind above everything else? She knew, that she was admired and courted—loved, perhaps, by two men at this time; the wealthy, gay, extravagant Hector Thompson, and the earnest, unselfish Frank Leslie. In a different way she liked them both. She respected and revered the latter infinitely more; but the former was the "better match." Hector could give her those things that she esteemed most highly in this life,—ease, luxury, and everything she could want. Frank would be for years nothing better than a struggling curate—Celia's lips curved with sudden scorn. She be nothing better than a poor clergyman's wife? Never! She would manage to do better for herself than that!

CHAPTER XIV.

CLIVE'S CONQUEST.

"COME with me this morning, Clive, and see my dear little Jack," said Reinée.

"I shall be jealous of that precious Jack if you persist in using such endearing terms."

"Well, be as jealous as you like, but come with me. It is so nice to have you all by yourself again."

Clive was lolling on a green bank beneath the terrace with a newspaper beside him. Reinée, parasol in hand and basket on arm, had come to seek him before starting on her expedition. Clive was in his white flannels, and evidently proposed some boating or lawn tennis that day. He looked up at his sister as she spoke the last words with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Is that meant for a compliment to Trevelyan?"

Reinée colored a little.

"I cannot help being very glad he has gone, although I do not like saying inhospitable things about any guest of ours, especially if it is a friend of yours."

"Well, to tell the truth, Reinée," answered Clive, "I don't regret him much myself. He does not altogether improve as he grows older. You were pretty nearly right, I believe, in your verdict. I do not believe he is a good man. He is not good enough, anyway, for my little sister. I am glad he has gone, and I hope he will not come back very quickly."

"Do you think he will?"

"Undoubtedly he will, sooner or later. He will not let go his prize without a struggle; but he evidently saw that he was not favored by you, and could reckon on no support from me, and he judged it wise to let well alone, and not provoke a refusal by speaking at an inopportune moment. After that narrow escape of mine on the cliff he seemed to know he had lost a point or two by his shirking danger. Your regal scorn was a little too much for him, Reinée—you can be magnificent when you are roused; and now he has taken himself off awhile to 'wait till the clouds roll by.'"

Reinée stood silent for a few minutes wrapt in thought, but then, putting on one side all unpleasant topics, she smiled in the sunny fashion her brother loved to see.

"And meantime we can enjoy ourselves

without him; and you are to come with me this morning to see my dear little Jack."

"And where does this prodigy reside?"

"In a nice little cottage half-way down the cliff. You will come, won't you, Clive?" for he had made no sign of moving all this time, and was lying back in luxurious ease upon the bank.

"I suppose my life will be a burden to me until I do," answered Clive, rising leisurely, "and you must play tennis with me this afternoon in return. Now, give me that basket; I suppose I must needs be a beast of burden when we go on these charitable errands. There, which way? All right—phew! How hot it is in the sun?"

And laughing and talking in gay and easy fashion they approached the cliff path and began the descent.

"I hate stuffy cottages!" remarked Clive, who loved to grumble; "especially on a day like this."

"Well, you need not go in, Mr. Fastidious. You can stay and talk to little Jack outside. He is sure to be out on a day like this. I must go in and talk to his mother."

"Is it the father of this little chap that works on the farm—a delicate-looking man they call Stone?" asked Clive.

"Yes, do you know anything of him?"

"Only that he seems to understand his business very well, and he's rather knowing with horses, too. He suggested something for Gipsy's strained shoulder after her fall that did her more good than anything else. I was telling the governor the other day what a handy, civil-spoken sort of fellow he was."

Reinée looked pleased.

"That is a good boy, Clive. Always stand up for my protégés."

"Of course," answered Clive, promptly; and as they were now approaching the cottage, further conversation was suspended.

Little Jack was lying out upon his cushioned couch in the shade, and his face looked brown and healthy. The good nourishing food which the improved circumstances of the family enabled his mother to give him had worked a marked change for the better since Reinée had seen him first. He had a table in front of him on which lay a vast assortment of odds and ends of rubbish, such as boys love to collect about them.

As the visitors approached, he looked up, and his face beamed all over when he saw Reinée.

"Mother, mother!" he cried, "here's my young lady!"

Mrs. Stone, at the sound of the call, appeared at the cottage door, and courtesied to the visitors. Clive lifted his hat and Reinée smiled, and touched Jack's curly head with her gloved hand.

"You are very busy this morning, Jack. What are you doing with all that wood?"

"I'm a trying to make a boat, I am," answered the child, brightly, "but it ain't so easy as it looks."

"Well, you ask my big brother to tell you how. He was a great hand at it once. He's come here to see you this morning, you see."

"Thank'ee sir," said Jack, pulling his forelock.

Reinée passed into the cottage, and Clive seated himself in an easy attitude upon the low stone wall that bounded the little garden on the sea side, and was close to the foot of Jack's couch.

"A nice young man you are to go tumbling down precipices and breaking your bones! I suppose it was an excuse for playing truant all these weeks. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, that you ought."

Jack grinned from ear to ear.

"Well, it weren't my fault, I don't think. It were an accident. Besides you broked your own leg, you did, when you were at school,"

and he looked up in Clive's face with a little laugh of triumph.

"Who told you that, you young rascal?"

"My young lady did," and Jack glanced towards the cottage where Reinée had disappeared. "She said you wanted a deal of amusing, she did."

Clive laughed mirthfully, and Jack, encouraged by the kindness of the young gentleman's face and manner, concluded archly: "She didn't tell me as you was ever ashamed of yourself."

"Ah, but I was old enough to do as I pleased, and you're not, which makes all the difference. And how soon are they going to get you on your legs again?"

"In about a week, my doctor says. He's going to let me have a pair of crutches to get about on a little; and then I shall have a stick, and then I shall run about as I did used to do. It were a bad break, it were, but it's doing famous, and I shan't be no worse for it in the long run, that's what he says."

"Dr. Meynal?"

"Yes; he's a good 'un, he is, and so is Miss Barbara. She sent my young lady, and she's the best of them all. I've been in rare luck, I have!"

Jack's whole face glowed, and Clive, glancing at the child with his broken limb, and homely surroundings, fell into a brief reverie, from which he roused himself to observe—

"And so you don't know how to set about making a boat, don't you?—and you half a sailor, too? How comes that?"

"Well, I ain't got much of a knife to start with," answered Jack, holding up a weather-stained haft with about an inch and a half of rusty, broken blade.

"Think that's any better?" asked Clive, tossing him the one from his own pocket.

Jack's eyes sparkled with delighted interest as he handled the wonderful implement, and carefully opened one bright, sharp blade after another, and tested their edges with his thumbnail.

"That's something like a knife!" he said with great admiration. "I expects that was made in London, I do."

"Well, I dare say you're not much out. And do you think it would do your business for you better than that treasure?"

Jack looked a little mystified.

"Would you like to keep it altogether to help with your boat-building business?"

Jack's eyes opened wide, and he drew a long breath.

"Be you a joking, sir?" he asked.

"No, old fellow, I mean what I say. You may keep it. I dare say I've another at home. Now, let's see how you set to work—I'll show you a dodge or two. I was a dab hand at that sort of thing when I was a shrimp like you."

Reinée sat some twenty minutes in the cottage with Mrs. Stone, hearing about Jack's progress, and the other simple joys and sorrows that make up the sum of many lives. Mrs. Stone was not a woman who could talk of her affairs to many people, but Reinée's gentle ways and sweet smiles had won the way to her heart, whilst the kindness shown to her little boy during this time that would otherwise have been so trying had filled her with a deep and earnest gratitude.

So she could talk to the young lady from the Hall as she had not been able to talk to any one for many a long day, and Reinée listened with an interest that was not in the least feigned, and which, by its sincerity, seemed to invite confidence.

When the girl quitted the cottage and rounded the angle of the house that hid Jack's couch from view, she saw something that caused her a sensation of considerable surprise.

During the whole month that she had been

visiting at the cliff cottage she had never once succeeded in winning a single word or smile from the crippled girl, Alice. Beloved as she was by all the rest of the family, and particularly by Jack, his sister had never consented to make friends or to relax the hostile attitude she had established from the first. Reinée was sorry and perplexed, but as all her efforts to make friends had proved fruitless, and as the child was said to be a little wrong in the head, she had at last yielded up the attempt and had ceased to pay the attentions that were obviously so much resented. So that her surprise was now very great at what she now saw.

Clive was seated as before on the low wall and was working away at a miniature boat to which he was putting the finishing touches, whilst Jack watched him with eager eyes.

Clive was whistling as he worked, and his whistle was peculiarly clear and sweet and bird-like, and he could trill and shake and warble like a sky-lark.

Jack was listening with as much pleasure as he watched, and he was not the only auditor, for Alice had drawn near from the other side of the wall and was standing quite close to Clive, her lips parted in a breathless smile, her eyes wide and full of delight, her

whole face so wonderfully changed and softened that Reinée hardly knew the girl.

"'Tis the music," said Jack, in a low voice catching Reinée's look of surprise. "Our Alice does so love it."

Clive ceased whistling as his sister approached, and looked up with his merry smile.

"Is the charitable mission accomplished?" he asked in French, "and have we sufficiently done our duty to our neighbor?"

Reinée smiled and sat down for a few minutes to talk to Jack.

"I have heard from the lady to whom I sent your sea-weeds, Jack. She is very much pleased with them and has sent you half a sovereign," and Reinée produced the bright little coin and held it out to Jack.

Jack's eyes sparkled more brightly than the gold. He took it eagerly and looked at it, and then held it out to Reinée.

"Will you take care of it for me, please? And I'll try and save up all I can to get mother a warm gown or shawl against the cold weather comes."

"Yes, Jack, I will do that gladly," answered Reinée, "and if you do some more sea-weed as nicely as the last, I dare say I can find a purchaser again."

"And if you'll make me a fleet of decent boats for my little nephews," added Clive, "I'll give you sixpence a piece for them."

As Clive had no small nephews, Reinée heard this proposition with considerable amusement, and her brother catching the glance in her eye laughed aloud; but Jack was too delighted at his good luck to observe anything of this.

Alice had moved away as soon as the whistling ceased, and was now hidden behind a low bush. "Sing us a song before we go, Clive," said Reinée. "I want to see how Jack can carve."

So Clive sang a good, rollicking, sailor song, with a swing in it that seemed to speak of beating waves and a rolling ship. His voice was as clear and true and flexible as his whistle had been, and Jack forgot his boat to listen, whilst Alice drew nearer and nearer as if drawn by an invisible power.

When Clive stopped she was close beside him. He looked down at her with a smile.

"Well, is it so very wonderful?" he asked, catching the wrapt expression in her eyes. "Did you never hear any one sing before?"

"Not like that," she answered, without shrinking away as Reinée had expected. "I think the angels must sing like that."

Clive laughed a little at the notion.

"Can't you sing me a song? It's your turn now."

But Alice shook her head.

"I can't sing when anybody's there to hear."

"Well, you must sing to me some day when we're quite alone," he answered, smiling as he got off the wall. "Are you ready, Reinée? We have stayed an unconscionable time; but you don't seem shy of inflicting yourself upon the community."

They spoke their kindly adieus, and brother and sister had almost ascended the steep path to the top of the cliff when the patter of footsteps behind them made Clive turn round.

The lame girl was hurrying after them as quickly as her crutches would allow, and as the young man stepped back a pace or two to meet her, she pulled from her waistband a single, half-blown, white moss rose evidently just gathered, and put it into his hand; then turning quickly round, she began descending the rugged path with marvellous agility.

"Why, Clive," said Reinée with a smile, "you have achieved at one stroke what I have failed to accomplish by much pains and patience. Alice will not speak to me or look at me if she can help it."

"I suppose she is a little touched in the head?"

"She is peculiar, but I do not know that it amounts to more than that."

Clive laughed at the idea, and gave little heed to the matter; but he began to take an interest from that day forward in the little bright-eyed Jack and his odd, lame sister.

The cliff path was the shortest way down to the beach, where Clive's boat lay moored, and he was in the habit of passing the little thatched cottage two or three times a week. He would never go by without a kind word to Jack, and a promise that when he was well enough he should come with him and steer his boat.

As for Alice, she watched for him in her odd, silent fashion day by day, and never let him pass without some simple offering of flower, or fern, or perhaps a curious shell or pebble. Sometimes he would sit on the wall awhile, and chat to Jack or sing a song, and Alice always hovered around, evidently taking a keen pleasure in these visits.

Clive did not think much of the matter, little knowing what the lame girl's devotion was to cost him, but Reinée was much surprised by what she heard and saw, as were the inmates of the cottage themselves.

But Alice could give no explanation of her odd likes and dislikes. She told Jack that Miss Dumaresq only came to amuse herself, and did not really care for them, and no indignant protestations on her brother's part could shake her in this conviction. Why she did not resent Clive's visits on the same ground it would be hard to say; but his voice and his whistle and perhaps the very carelessness of his merry ways had quite won her stubborn heart, and he became to her at once a hero and an idol.

Nobody, however, had the least idea what was to come of Clive's conquest, or to what results it would lead. Certainly, there was something very attractive about the two young Dumaresqs, this brother and sister who were so devotedly attached to one another, and who won all hearts by their kindly sympathy and ready interest in the life around them into which they were so willing to enter.

Clive had taken a great liking for Wulfrie Meynal, partly, perhaps, out of gratitude, but more from genuine admiration for the man himself; and the difficulty of improving the acquaintance only seemed to increase the young man's desire for it.

Wulfrie was much too busy to pay or receive visits, and it never occurred to him that his

society could afford pleasure to others. That the gay and brilliant Clive could really desire his company was an idea that never entered his head, and yet such was undoubtedly the case, and by-and-by even Wulfrie became convinced of it, and the consciousness brought with it an odd glow of pleasure and a sense of gratitude and satisfaction.

Clive would often stroll in at the hour when Wulfrie was usually at leisure; and as often as he could he would get the young doctor to the Hall, or detain him there after a professional visit and improve the acquaintance by every means in his power.

Mr. Dumaresq liked Wulfrie exceedingly, and had the utmost confidence in his skill. He was benefitted by his treatment, and was more inclined to think favourably of his own case than he had been able to do before.

Mrs. Dumaresq believed in the young doctor's medical skill, although she had no liking for him personally. She would have preferred only to receive him on a strictly professional footing; but then Clive was the very idol of her rather cold heart, and whatever he chose to do she could not oppose. She was so pleased at having him at home that she was glad for him to enliven his time in every possible way, and if Dr. Meynal's

society was an attraction, she would make no objection to the friendship. To her, Wulfrie was so essentially an unpleasing and uninteresting man—rough, heavy, and dull, she mentally called him—that the idea of his attracting the esteem and regard of her daughter never for a moment occurred to her.

Yet Reinée saw a great deal of her brother's friend on the occasions when he came to the Hall, and she shared Clive's admiration and respect for him in no small degree. Since she had begun to help Barbara a little in visiting some of the sick poor, a common bond of sympathy seemed to unite them, and they had many things to discuss together, and Wulfrie was often appealed to for advice with regard to some of Reinée's plans and projects.

Of course, she was inclined to "spoil the people," as Wulfrie often told her, with a smile that robbed the rebuke of anything like ungraciousness. With money at easy command, and warm feelings of sympathy towards all who were suffering from any kind of ill, it was inevitable that Reinée should incline to an over-lavishness of generosity; and many of her pretty little plans were negatived with a smile by Wulfrie, a smile half sad, half pleased, and he would say with his unconscious air of command, "No, Miss Dumaresq, if you want

my sanction I cannot give it. Do not pauperise the people, and teach them to think that they are to have everything they fancy just because you have plenty to give. Keep your money for the really weak and suffering, and those who cannot help themselves; but let those who can work do so, and do not continue doles longer than is absolutely necessary, nor let it be thought that you encourage idleness or needless complainings."

And if Reinée sometimes looked a little sad and disappointed at having some pet scheme quietly put aside in this way, she very soon learned how wise and far-seeing Wulfrie Meynal's judgments were, and how really tender-hearted he was in any case of genuine distress and suffering. She began to feel that he could never be wrong, and to look up to him as to a great and good man who stood on a higher level than that of ordinary mortals.

Her manner towards him, though always sweet and gracious, had just that touch of reserve that is often to be noticed in the young towards those whom they most reverence and respect. Mrs. Dumaresq observed it with satisfaction, and considered that Reinée was acting with becoming dignity. But Clive sometimes smiled to himself as he listened to the discussions between his sister and his

friend, and said to himself that she was never so bewitching as when she was talking in that earnest, serious way, appealing to him with such perfect confidence in his judgment and such absolute trust in his kindness.

"I don't know how Trevelyan would like it if he were here," he said sometimes to himself, "but I doubt if he will be here just yet. He certainly went away in high dudgeon about something, and when he comes back it seems to me that the chances are it will be—too late."

CHAPTER XV.

JULIET'S EXPERIENCES.

"WELL, Miss Granby, so it is hard work that you want to find, is it? So you say in your letter, and so Dr. Meynal gave me to understand. If that is the case there will be no difficulty in obliging you; but you must be prepared for disagreeables. Hospital life is not a bed of roses."

So said Mrs. Martin, the matron of the Aylcester County Infirmary, as she surveyed with a keen, yet not unfriendly glance, the girl who had been waiting for nearly half an hour for an interview with her.

Juliet with her modest luggage had arrived at the hospital about an hour before, according to previous arrangement, and now she was confronted for the first time with the head of the department to which she was to belong.

Mrs. Martin was a large, active woman, with a capable air and a manner that plainly bespoke her in a position of command. Although not perhaps a lady by birth she was by no means lacking in native refinement and good feeling; but the busy and responsible life

she led had left its stamp upon her in a certain quickness of speech and abruptness of manner that led at once to the conclusion that she was not to be trifled with.

Juliet, though little in the way of feeling over-awed, had an instinctive conviction that Mrs. Martin was a woman to be respected, and one into whose disfavor it would not be pleasant to fall. So she felt that the best thing to be done was to try and make a good impression at starting.

"I do not expect things to be easy or pleasant," she answered. "It is because I am tired of idleness that I have come here. I want hard work, and to see something of life."

Mrs. Martin glanced at her a little keenly.

"Well, some people never know when they are well off. I always say every life has its own work and its own lessons if people will but look for them. However, you have chosen for yourself, and you ought to know your own business best. You will see something of life here, undoubtedly, but whether your experiences will please you or not remains to be proved."

Juliet made no reply, and after a short pause the matron continued to speak:

"You understand that we have no special arrangements here for lady nurses?"

“Yes.”

“You will have to take your place as an ordinary working probationer, under the orders of the head nurse of the ward in which you are placed, and to a certain extent under the assistant nurses, also. If you are not prepared to obey promptly and unquestioningly those who are placed above you, it is useless your coming here at all.”

But Juliet was in one of her heroic moods, and she was not at all daunted by this prospect, though obedience was not exactly her strong point.

“I am quite prepared to do my duty, whatever it may be.”

“Very good. Your duty is to learn your own work, which can only be done in the first place by close attention to orders, and by diffidence in acting, even in the smallest matters, upon your own responsibility, which is a thing that only really experienced nurses should do. Your ward work you will learn, of course, in the wards—I need not attempt to define it here. There will be a good deal of drudgery that does not come under the head of nursing proper, and yet which must be done, and a large share of that always falls upon the probationer. Are you prepared for that?”

"Yes," answered Juliet, "quite."

She was thinking in her own mind that it would not be long before she should work her way up by her talents and force of character to a less subordinate position, and meantime she must make the best of matters as they were. But she said nothing of this to Mrs. Martin, as she felt that it would not be understood.

"Very good, I am glad to hear it. I hope you may have a less rough time of it than some of my ladies have had."

"You have had ladies here before?"

"Yes, occasionally; but with one or two exceptions they have not stayed long, and, to tell the truth, they have been but little liked."

"Why?"

"Because they have not entered upon their duties in a proper or practical spirit. They have come here, not because they love the sick, or felt any talent for nursing, but because they were dull at home, or thought that nursing would be an easy way of making a living. They held themselves above the other nurses, were intolerant and careless, and often idle; and generally, after making themselves thoroughly unpopular throughout the building, they have gone away angry and hurt with everybody and everything."

Juliet was silent.

"Now, those I call my real ladies, have acted very differently," continued Mrs. Martin. "They never made any fuss about themselves and their position; but did their work with readiness and good humor, and by the self-command and gentleness and quickness that belongs, in a greater degree, to the upper than the lower classes, made themselves generally beloved, and showed a capacity that quickly made them of value wherever they went. One of these ladies is now superintendent of a large London hospital, and another comes to me every year to take head duty in the different wards while my head nurses go away for their holidays. If you can emulate them, Miss Granby, you will do well, and will have a chance of rising in the profession, if that is your wish."

"I should like very well to have the management of a large hospital," answered Juliet.

Mrs. Martin smiled.

"You will require a good deal of training before you will be fit for such a post."

"I suppose so; but I generally learn quickly. I suppose there is promotion even here when the rudiments are mastered?"

"Promotion cannot be very quick, for learning takes time. A probationer must serve

her year to become an assistant nurse, and as a nurse she may probably go on some years before she would receive an appointment as head nurse here. Vacancies are not very frequent, and we do not always find it advisable to promote our own nurses. A stranger from another hospital often does better, and has more influence over her under nurses than one taken from their own ranks. However, Miss Granby, you had better give up all thoughts of coming promotion for the present, and content yourself with trying to make a good and docile probationer. As I have hinted before, there is a certain amount of prejudice against ladies among the nurses; it will depend upon yourself whether you conquer it in your case or add to it."

Juliet hardly knew what she was expected to say, so she asked a question instead:

"Am I to begin work to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, in a men's medical ward. Your head nurse will be a Mrs. Beasley, an elderly woman and an excellent nurse, with whom you ought to have no difficulty in getting on. She is rather short-handed, as her probationer has to take 'special' duty in watching a delirious patient. She will be glad of your assistance."

"I suppose I shall have surgical work to do by-and-by?"

"Certainly; but I generally put new nurses into medical wards. There is less that is unpleasant to unseasoned nerves, and none of the hurry and bustle that is bewildering at first in the accident wards. We must all walk before we can run; and you will learn your routine better under Mrs. Beasley than under any other head nurse."

Juliet would have preferred the activity and bustle of the accident wards, had the choice been given her, but it was not; and there was something final in Mrs. Martin's manner that hindered her from objecting to her decision.

"I will have you shown up to your room now," she said, ringing a bell. "You will find it small and bare, but you did not come here expecting luxuries. Supper for the day nurses is at nine o'clock, and prayers follow immediately after. At ten all lights are put out, and at six a bell will awaken you each morning. Breakfast is at half-past six, ward work begins at seven. From twelve to half-past the probationers dine; from half-past twelve to one the assistant nurses. Tea goes on from five to six, and you go down as you can best arrange amongst yourselves, each

nurse being absent half an hour. On alternate afternoons the probationer has two hours for air and exercise, which on fine days is to be spent out of doors. The assistant nurses have their time off in the evening, and each nurse in the hospital, of whatever standing, has one day's holiday in a month. Now I think I have explained everything, and I dare say you will like to go upstairs and unpack. I will send you up some tea after your journey, and if you prefer to remain upstairs in the nurses' parlor, or your own room and go to bed early, you are at liberty to do so. You will not be bound by the ordinary rules before to-morrow morning."

A servant had now made her appearance.

"Take Nurse Granby up to her room—No. 16 in the top gallery."

Juliet followed her guide through long, lofty, echoing corridors, and up many, many flights of wide, stone steps. She passed many ward doors in her ascent, some of which were closed and some open, giving glimpses of the busy life within.

She saw several nurses going up or down the stairs, on various errands, all seeming too busy and intent to give her more than a passing glance; and a strange feeling of loneliness and isolation came over her as she realised





A Lesson in Boat-Building.

what a mere atom she was in this vast hive of human toil and industry.

When the three tiers of wards had been passed, the stairs still led upwards to a long, long gallery, that contained rows of doors with numbers upon them, rather, as Juliet fancied, like prison cells. The gallery was divided into sections, as it were, the larger rooms being given to the assistant nurses, two of whom shared one together, whilst the night nurses were lodged at the extreme end, so as to be as quiet as possible by day, and the probationers had a series of little cells, only divided one from the other by wooden partitions, rather like stalls or loose boxes in a stable.

"This is your room," said the maid, opening the door of one marked 16 and handing Juliet the key. "Your boxes are up already, so you can unpack and get all put to rights. You've got to keep everything very tidy, you know."

Juliet was rather offended at the freedom of the tone, but the girl, a clumsy, good-humored, provincial lass, had not the least idea of such a thing.

"Have you ever done any nursing before?" she asked.

"No," answered Juliet, briefly, as she began examining the narrow limits of her room,

which contained only the plainest of furniture—a low, narrow bedstead, a washing-stand, a chest of drawers, which served also for a toilet table, and beneath the little window a small cupboard, for boots and other odds and ends. All the hanging space was a few pegs on the door, and Juliet, who had been used to plenty of accommodation and dainty fittings about her, felt an odd sense of dismay and disgust.

“Well, I almost wonders you took to it, then. I often say to cook as I’d ten times rather be a scullery-maid than one of them nusses. We don’t have such a bad time of it downstairs, though to be sure there’s plenty to do of a morning with all the dinners to do—patients’ and nusses’ and doctors’ lunches and all. But we do slack off a bit towards evening, and can have a bit of a gossip round; but them poor nusses is always at it hard, and is that druv sometimes as they don’t know how to get along. If I was you I’d change my mind and come on as a servant, I would.”

Juliet was not given to see the humorous side of a situation, and she got rid of the well-meaning Nancy in so summary a fashion as to give a good deal of offence to that damsel, in revenge for which affront the tea was brought up cold and sloppy, whilst the accompanying food was anything but appetising.

Juliet was growing depressed by her surroundings, and she had little inclination to eat; but as she shrank from facing the strange nurses in the supper room she took the refreshment provided for her, and spent the rest of the evening in unpacking and arranging her things in her drawers and about her room. She had brought a few pictures and favorite books and contrived to give a little homeliness and finish to the sordid surroundings which had shocked her at first; and then, feeling very tired and not a little dispirited, she went early to bed, and as she was a good sleeper, she fell fast asleep, and knew nothing till aroused by the bell in the morning.

Juliet was not fond of early rising, and at home she had seldom been down to a half-past eight o'clock breakfast, but she had no choice in the matter now, and signs of life around her warned her that there was no time to be lost. Her hospital uniform with regulation cap and apron was all ready for use, and by seven o'clock she was ready to go down.

She heard the other doors open and the sound of voices in conversation as the occupants of the adjoining rooms streamed past, and she followed at a short distance the other nurses, who were descending to the dining-room. This room was in the basement, and

was dreary and dark even on a bright summer's morning. Long tables were there, spread with coarse cloths, and the fare, though plentiful enough and good, was exceedingly plain, and, to one of Juliet's tastes and habits, coarse also. A housekeeper presided over the meal, told Juliet where to sit, and saw that she got plenty to eat and drink. There was a great deal of quick talking and rather loud laughing amongst many of the nurses, but Juliet's neighbors happened to be silent, and she was too much bewildered to notice what passed farther away.

"Can you tell me where I shall find Mrs. Beasley's ward?" asked Juliet, as there was a general rise from the table.

The housekeeper looked round her quickly.

"Nurse Ray," she called out, "you're in York just now, aren't you? Well, here's your new probationer—Nurse Granby, isn't your name?—Just show her the way and set her to work. She's new to everything, you know."

"Come on, then," answered the dark-eyed woman who had answered to the name of Nurse Ray. "I hope you mean to work, for we're run off our legs in York just now. Mrs. Beasley wants two probationers, I always do say, but one is supposed to be enough."

Talking thus, she led the way up several

flights of stairs to the wards in the long wing on the first floor, and Juliet found that she had at last reached her goal and was in the midst of hospital work.

At seven o'clock in the morning a hospital ward is a dreary place; all the work has still to be done; beds are to be made, patients attended to, and all the dusting and sweeping and scrubbing must be got through that makes the place so neat and spotless later on.

Charwomen and nurses were hard at work as soon as ever they set foot in their domain; but Juliet stood in helpless uncertainty, not knowing what to do or how to do it.

"Here, you may as well help me with my cases," said the night-nurse, a bustling old body, who was busy with a man who looked terribly ill. "I'll put you in the way of making beds and all that sort of thing. These young nurses have no patience with beginners—you'll not learn anything from them. New hands are always more trouble than they're worth; but there, you'll learn it all in time. Don't you be discouraged at starting."

For the next two hours, so long as the night-nurse remained on duty, Juliet had plenty to do in helping her, and she picked up a good deal of desultory instruction from

her new friend. She learned which were her own special "beds"—those that the probationer was expected to make and attend to, and the night-nurse helped her with them in return for the assistance she had received; and if the work was not very pleasant, at least it was work, and kept her fully occupied all the time.

But as the day passed on, Juliet began to doubt very much the wisdom of her choice. She resented being sharply spoken to by the other nurses, and they were offended at her holding aloof from them. It was as much strangeness as pride, as it happened: but Juliet had never tried to be pleasant and courteous to those beneath her, and she could not in a moment change the habits of a lifetime.

Then, of course, as in actual nursing she was entirely untrained, the work that fell to her share was more entirely of the menial kind than would be the case a little later on, had she only realised it. There was plenty of true nursing to be done by all those who knew how to do it, but until she had obtained sufficient experience to see what was wanted, and how it was to be accomplished, she was powerless to set to any task upon her own account. Mrs. Beasley was too busy at this

particular juncture to give the time she sometimes bestowed on a new probationer, and Juliet was too proud to ask for information, or to appear anxious to learn, in case by so doing she should further reveal her ignorance.

And so, as it seemed to her, the first week of this hospital life, to which she had looked forward as something so grand and beautiful, was spent in washing up medicine cups and administering doses, in carrying bottles and jars backwards and forwards from the wards to the dispensary, and in going on errands that any child could have done just as well, whilst her feet ached with the perpetual tramp up and down the hard stairs, and her mind revolted against the menial drudgery forced upon her.

It was only pride, and a sort of instinct of the way in which people would talk of her "fiasco," that prevented Juliet from giving up at the end of a week and going back to St. Hilda; but pride came to her aid, and she made no sign that could be construed into repentance for the step she had taken. She had more to learn yet of the sweets of her own way.

After the first ten days matters seemed to mend somewhat. Juliet was not stupid—by nature she was quick, capable and observant—and she soon began to pick up knowledge, and

to apply herself with zeal and energy to her work.

When, however, Mrs. Beasley went away for a fortnight's holiday, and a stranger came for a time in her place, Juliet had a very happy time of it and was for a time in all her glory.

Miss Conway, although a capable nurse, who often came in as a *locum tenens* to the infirmary, had no knowledge of the individual cases of which she had to take sudden charge, and she naturally turned to the most capable of the under nurses for help and information. Juliet had by that time been two months in the wards, and the intelligent interest she took in her work made her invaluable to the new head nurse, who consulted her about everything, placed her tacitly almost upon a level with herself, and treated her with marked favor and consideration.

Juliet was capable enough to be exceedingly useful, and it was so pleasant to her to feel herself practically at the head of affairs that she began to consider the position as her own by right, and to forget that she was only a subordinate and probationer.

So long as Miss Conway remained nothing disagreeable occurred. Juliet gave orders, rebuked the under nurses, and kept a firm hand over the patients, and nothing was said or done

to show her that her conduct was resented. Neither would it have been of necessity resented had the girl been pleasant and friendly during her temporary elevation, but unluckily, old habits of imperiousness and impatience awoke with the exercise of authority, and she made herself exceedingly unpopular without intending to be offensive.

When Miss Conway went away and Mrs. Beasley returned, Juliet found the tables turned upon her in a way that was totally unexpected. At first she fancied she would be allowed to retain a portion of the authority she had been enjoying, and Mrs. Beasley's quiet remark that "she was able to manage her wards without instructions from her probationer" had to be repeated many times before it did its work.

The assistant nurses were less judicious and openly made game of her, and Juliet's haughty displeasure was foolishly displayed, and only won for her more ridicule.

She became decidedly insubordinate; was in disgrace many times for breach of rule, and finally was removed from Mrs. Beasley's wards at the head nurse's special request. She was learning her life's lesson in a hard school, and was learning it all the more slowly and hardly from the self-will in which she had so long encouraged herself. She had won for herself

a bad name already, despite her undoubted capacity and industry, and she was finding how hard it was to get on with any sense of pleasure when she failed to win the liking or confidence of those about her.

Yet perhaps this training was what she most needed, and would teach her the lesson that it was most necessary she should learn—distrust of herself and a less eager desire after her own way.

CHAPTER XVI.

GERALD'S RESOLVE.

GERALD stayed away from home a whole week, during which time his family heard nothing whatever of him beyond the message that Mr. Leslie had brought.

His mother, now that her anxieties were once aroused upon the subject, worried herself almost into a fever over this protracted absence, picturing her son led away into every kind of mischievous dissipation—learning all manner of evil ways that he had never known before.

Wulfrie was so closely cross-questioned as to his own opinion, that he was obliged at length to admit his suspicions as to the probability of Gerald's having gone to the races, and the bare idea of such a thing threw his mother into a fever of anxiety and distress.

"Why didn't you stop him? Why didn't you tell me, that I might have stopped him?" she would moan, rocking herself to and fro in a half distracted way. "What a cruel son and neglectful brother you are,

Wulfrie! You knew all about these races and suspected that Gerald would wish to go, and yet you never lifted a finger to stop him. I cannot understand it—I cannot, indeed. Well, well, I suppose some people have no natural affection. I always told your dear father that you had none. Oh! if only he had lived I should have been spared all this!”

Wulfrie took all these reproaches very patiently and quietly. He knew that they were the out-come of his mother's morbid condition of health, and accepted them without any chafing or murmuring; but it made his position at home a trying one, and he dreaded when the time came that he must face the invalid and hear all the restless out-pourings of her anxiety and trouble. She always expected that he would bring home news of Gerald, as though his time had been spent in hunting up news of his brother, and his ignorance upon the point that so engrossed her thoughts was always the signal for the commencement of a fresh attack.

As days passed by, Mrs. Meynal became quite feverish and overwrought.

“Wulfrie,” she would say, “I cannot stand this. Gerald must be told that it cannot be allowed. When he comes home you must be

severe with him—you must tell him plainly that you cannot and will not have it—nor I either. A little more of such anxiety would fairly kill me. If he wishes to live here, he must have more consideration. Tell him so very plainly, as I have said before. Do not forget. Let him know that if he cannot behave better, and if he will not give up his bad associates, he cannot go on living here. Frighten him and threaten him. Don't let him turn you round his fingers as he always turns me. Mind you make him understand."

"I will do so, if you wish, mother," answered Wulfrie, "but I am very doubtful whether threatening Gerald will be a very wise or successful measure."

"Of course, you will oppose anything I wish. It has always been so all along; but I do know Gerald a little better than you do, I know what will be likely to take effect upon him."

"But will it be the effect you really wish to produce?"

Mrs. Meynal, however, would hear no reason. She had taken an idea into her head and she clung to it tenaciously. She was sufficiently frightened to feel that strong measures must be used, and she was unable to see any point of view but her own. Victory

was secure, she thought, if only matters were managed in her own way.

Wulfrie was in his study one night, when he heard the sound of a latch key being fitted into the front door. The door was locked for the night, as Gerald had ceased to be expected at late hours, but Wulfrie stepped out of the room and quietly unfastened the bolts and locks. Next moment the brothers were face to face.

"Ah, thanks, old fellow," said Gerald, easily and unconcernedly. "How are you all? All in bed but you? I want something to eat. Are the servants gone, too? Well, I'll go to the larder and forage for myself."

"There is cold meat in the dining-room," answered Wulfrie, as he turned to refasten the door. "I was myself late to-night."

Gerald turned accordingly into the dining-room, whither Wulfrie followed him almost at once and stood leaning his broad shoulders against the high mantel-shelf, whilst his brother attacked the viands on the table. His face was very grave and sombre and he seemed in no hurry to speak. Gerald, on the contrary, was in excellent spirits, and apparently had not the least suspicion of being in any way in disgrace.

"How has the world been wagging with

you?" he asked, looking up when the keen edge of his hunger was appeased. Then catching sight of the expression of his brother's face he laughed banteringly. "Talk of a skeleton at a feast! Why, a death's head would be a cheerful object as compared with you! Anything the matter, old boy?"

"Where have you been all this time, Gerald?"

"Oh, I've been about with Hector Thompson and some chums of his, seeing a little of the world, and getting ideas for my novel."

"You mean, I suppose, that you have been at the Ayleester races?"

"Well, yes, we certainly did spend a few days there. The horses were magnificent. I think I shall take to painting horses. I got several first rate ideas. It doesn't do to stagnate in a little hole like this all one's life; one must get a change from time to time."

"Why did you not write and let us know your whereabouts?"

"Oh, I am a shocking hand at letters, besides, I told young Leslie to let you know."

"You did not tell him where you were going."

"No, I hardly knew myself. I told him to say I might be away a week, and I've only been two days over time. I don't quite know,

though, why you should call me over the coals like this. I'm not responsible to you for my comings and goings."

Gerald spoke with perfect good temper, yet with a sort of assumption of independence that showed the way the current was setting.

"I am quite aware of that; I am not speaking on my own account, but in the character of a medical man who has to think seriously of his mother's state of health."

Gerald looked up quickly.

"Mother is all right."

"I beg your pardon; she is anything but right: and your absence and silence have had a very injurious effect upon her."

"How so?"

"She has been extremely uneasy about you; in total ignorance of your real proceedings, but imagining everything that was most distressing. In her condition of health a strain of this kind is most injurious. You ought to have more consideration."

Gerald was fond of his mother in his own careless and rather selfish fashion; but Wulfric's manner was hardly conciliatory, and he did not choose to accept with any degree of humility a rebuke administered by him.

"She might have known I was all right, I can take care of myself."

"Can you?"

Gerald flushed a little at the tone.

"To be sure," he answered, easily. I am quite capable of looking after my own interests."

Wulfrie was silent for a moment or two, knitting his brows in lines of deep thought.

"Look here, Gerald, it has come to this, and I am bound to speak out. You must pull up and look round you, and spend your time after a different fashion. You are idling away your life and getting into mischief, and it won't do. You have not got too far already to come back. You can turn over a new leaf and start afresh. But this sort of thing cannot go on. It is worrying our mother into her grave."

Gerald had risen by this time, and now stood facing his brother. He did not appear exactly angry, but there was more of settled, defiant resolution in his face than Wulfrie had ever seen there before. The suspicion occurred to him that his brother had been fortunate in his first taste of the turf; and that he had come home with plenty of money in his pockets. Possibly he believed, like so many youths who are unlucky enough to win at starting, that fortunes could be made without any labor or trouble. Surely had Gerald returned with

empty pockets and in debt, he would not be so full of spirits, or confront the world with such an independent and defiant mien.

"My dear fellow," he said, with an air of great assurance, "it is all very fine your talking like this, but what on earth has put it into our mother's head that I am getting into mischief, as you are pleased to call it?"

"I am afraid there can be little doubt upon that point, Gerald."

"In point of fact, you have heard rumors, and have stuffed her head full of terrors!"

"You can look at it as you like, and say what you choose, but you will not alter the facts of the case. Our mother is very unhappy about you, and her anxiety once aroused will not be laid to rest unless she has sufficient evidence that you have turned over a new leaf. If you do not care to do it for your own sake, you must do it for hers."

"Must!"

Gerald flushed a little under the steady glance of Wulfric's eye, and his blood began to rise.

"Well, yes, practically you will find that you must, for you will hardly care to accept the alternative."

"What is the alternative?"

Wulfric looked steadily into his brother's

face and did not answer at once. He felt that the position was difficult, that he had a part to play that required the greatest skill and care; whilst he was hampered with directions that did not approve themselves to his convictions, and lacking in the power of diplomatic finesse so much needed by one in his position.

"What is the alternative?" repeated Gerald.

"The alternative is to make an independent home for yourself, where the irregularities of your life will not have an injurious effect upon our mother, as they will do if you persist in them here."

Gerald drew his breath rather hard.

"You threaten me——?" He paused as if uncertain how to conclude his sentence, and the flush deepened in his face. There was no dismay in his expression, rather, as it seemed, a gleam as of triumph; and Wulfric fancied he could not have understood the drift of the conversation.

"I have not the least wish to threaten. All I wish is to obtain your promise to give up your present associates, and to set to work in good earnest to make your own way in life."

"You have said all that before."

"Yes; but I am afraid you have done nothing to bring about the desired result."

"What result?"

"Your own independence."

With a smile of triumph Gerald drew from his pocket a roll of bank notes, and showed them for a moment to his brother. Whatever was the value of those notes they must represent a considerable sum of money.

"That is something like independence, eh? You cannot say I have not fulfilled my share of the compact."

Wulfrie's face was stern and set.

"That money was never honestly earned, Gerald."

"It was honestly won, then—which comes much to the same thing," was the careless answer.

Wulfrie laid his hand upon his brother's shoulder.

"Gerald, I implore you to restore that money, and have no more to do with gambling in any of its forms. If you had seen as much as I have of what it leads to, you would never be tempted to bet again. Ah, Gerald! you smile, you think I am a simpleton, you don't know what you are doing—I do!"

A slightly supercilious smile played over Gerald's face. Wulfrie's sudden vehemence, born of a real agitation and fear for his brother, seemed ridiculous and childish.

"My good fellow," he answered, impatiently, "you may be very clever over your medicine bottles and bandages, but you do not know everything, and I will not submit to be lectured by you to this extent. Oh, yes, I understood you perfectly well just now. You were a little ashamed to put it into plain words, but your meaning was clear enough. You meant to say that, unless I was prepared to be tied to my mother's apron strings, or to do my brother's bidding entirely, let him choose my friends, and regulate my life for me, I was to be turned out of house and home, and made to feel my own dependence and helplessness by having the part of the prodigal son forced upon me. Oh, yes, you meant all that, my good fellow; it's all very well to try and cry off now you see I have my pockets well lined and can afford to laugh at your threats; but you did mean that, and a very noble and brother-like threat it was,—about as just as it was generous. Well, Wulfrie, you have had your say, and I have had mine. It is plain we shall never agree; so I take you at your word, and I leave home at once and for ever."

Wulfrie had let his hand drop from his brother's shoulder. His face was very grave and anxious. He was increasingly disturbed

by each new turn the conversation took. This Gerald was not the Gerald he had known from childhood, but, as it were, a stranger to him: a man intoxicated by the first smile of fortune, who sees wealth and ease and plenty lying before him, and is dazzled by the sight into an utter incapacity for seeing the dangers of his path or the sterner aspects of life.

"Gerald," said Wulfrie, quietly and very earnestly, "do not take any step rashly. Pause and think well what you do. If I have spoken hastily, I, too, will reconsider and retract my words, if I have gone beyond what is just and right. We are brothers, Gerald, and I, at least, have every wish that our relations with each other should be friendly and brother-like. For our mother's sake we must avoid heat and rashness."

"You talk very like a book, my dear fellow," answered Gerald, with one of his rather magnificent smiles, "but the fact remains that you were pleased to threaten me in a very decided fashion so long as you believed me penniless, and only turned round when you discovered that I could afford to laugh at your threats. Your game is very plain to read. You wish to coerce where you cannot convince, and I object to that line of policy."

Wulfrie was depressed and weary. He felt he had made a mess of the whole business, and he knew that Gerald's late successes on the race-course had completely upset both his own plan and that of his mother for gaining an influence over this pleasure-loving youth. In some points Gerald was very like his mother. He never could see any point of view but his own.

"Think it over, Gerald, think it over," said Wulfrie, again. "Do not act in heat and do not act in haste."

Gerald smiled, but made no reply. Wulfrie looked steadily at him for a few seconds, and then laid a hand upon his shoulder once more.

"My dear boy, I know I am not a great deal older than you, but I have had a good deal more experience of life. I don't want to dictate to you, or to make myself in any way offensive; but I do ask you to pause and consider before you take any decided step. We have always been good friends, Gerald; don't let us begin to quarrel now."

Gerald laughed a little, but he shook off the hand from his shoulder with some petulance.

"Who talks of quarrelling?" he answered; and moved away to the door.

Wulfrie looked after him almost wistfully. He felt as if a gulf had suddenly opened

between him and Gerald. Some instinct warned him that his brother's purpose had not changed, but Gerald left him and went up to his room, and Wulfrie knew that no more words would be possible that night.

Next morning the following note, found in Gerald's empty room by a servant, and brought to Mrs. Meynal before she ever knew that he had returned, threw her into a paroxysm of agitation and distress.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER.—I came home last evening, but was given my congé by Wulfrie so emphatically, that I have decided to clear out, bag and baggage, without the fatigue of farther adieus. I am going to London to seek my fortune; when I am a great man you shall hear from me.—Your affectionate son, GERALD MEYNAL."

Of course, this step of Gerald's became at once the talk of the place. St. Hilda was excited over it, and although inclined to prophecy fame and glory for the departed favorite, yet resented the hasty way in which the departure had been made. Friends had been cheated out of the pleasure of saying farewell, and of talking the future over with the young man, and giving him good advice. They did not approve of this, and the story that it was Wulfrie's harshness that had driven Gerald

away obtained ready credence amongst those who respected Wulfrie's talents without understanding his nature.

Poor Mrs. Meynal's distress and despair when she received Gerald's note and learned that her darling boy had again left home for an indefinite period knew no bounds. For some days she was really ill, and even when she recovered her usual health, her distress in no whit abated, and, of course, Wulfrie was the scape-goat upon whom all her upbraidings and lamentations were lavished.

Wulfrie had no present thoughts of marriage. His mind was engrossed by too many matters to have room left for tenderer and more personal feelings; yet of late there had sometimes stolen over him, in his few leisure moments, sweet, soft dreams of what life might be, shared with some gentle woman, who would share as by living instinct his loftier ideals, and yet be a willing helpmeet in the thousand little cares and sorrows that go to make up the run of daily life.

What had first started such a train of thought Wulfrie could not have said; but it had haunted him of late at rare moments, and had always been followed by the chill sense of conviction that marriage was not for him.

How could he bring a wife into that cheer-

less, loveless home of his? He breathed no reproach against his fretful mother; but he suffered too much from her himself, to be willing to subject another to a like infliction. Celia's nature seemed little likely to add harmony to life, and Barbara's impetuosity did harm rather than good, well-meaning as it always was.

No, to that home Wulfrie could never bring a wife, and yet the cost of an independent establishment for himself would be, as he plainly saw, far beyond his means. He could not turn his mother away from the house that had been her home ever since she came to it a bride thirty years ago, and the way in which the household was maintained made saving almost impossible. So Wulfrie, with a sigh, put away from him all the dreams—which after all were only dreams—and took up his daily duties and troubles with a steady courage that, little as he knew it, were transforming him into something of a hero.

Suffering is a great master, if a hard one, and in his school we learn truth that, perhaps, we might never grasp elsewhere.

Wulfrie Meynal was now learning lessons of patience, fortitude, self-distrust and trust in God—which were fitting him for brighter days as, perhaps, nothing else could have done.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. DUMARESQ IS ALARMED.

IF Wulfric Meynal was to taste more happiness in the future, the present, at any rate, looked sufficiently dark and gloomy.

His mother's health gave him great uneasiness. He was terribly anxious about his gay, young brother, and his anxiety was not altogether untinged by remorse, which made it doubly hard to bear. He blamed himself, and yet hardly knew in what he had been wrong.

Barbara was always a staunch ally, and he fancied that Celia's manner had grown somewhat more gentle towards him of late, although she was so impassive that it was hard to speak certainly on this point; but his mother never saw him without uttering reproaches and lamentations that cut him to the heart, and cast a dark shadow upon his difficult path.

Yet as there are always spots of brightness as well as dark shadows upon the chequered path of life, so amid the wearing troubles and perpetual, distressful fault-finding to which he was subjected, there were brighter days and hours at times in which Wulfric was conscious

of a sense of pleasure and satisfaction for which he could by no means entirely account.

There had been a sad accident in a mine not many miles distant from St. Hilda. Some score of poor miners had been badly injured, and as their village lay nearly two miles away from the mouth of the shaft, and they could ill support the rough journey, a large shed, generally used for storing the ore, had been converted into a sort of rough ambulance or hospital.

Wulfric was the nearest doctor, but as he had not time to undertake, single-handed, so many critical cases, he had sent for two qualified students from the county infirmary to take main charge of the sufferers, whilst he came over daily to give his opinion on the worst cases, and to see that all went well.

It was upon the fourth day after the accident that, the moment he entered the rude ward, he became aware of some subtle and pleasant change, and standing still in the doorway he looked round him trying to make out exactly what it was.

For one thing there were flowers everywhere, and the scent of roses and clove carnations made a sweet fragrance in the place. Then there were blinds fixed in the bare windows, so that the hot sun could be shut out on the

south side, and there were white counterpanes upon the beds, where yesterday there had been only coarse and not always very clean blankets.

Altogether the place was transformed, and as Wulfrie looked about him in silent surprise, he became aware of the presence of two visitors, who quietly emerged from behind a screen at the far corner, and a clue was at once put in his hands. One of these visitors was Mrs. Granby, the other Reinée Dumaresq.

The girl saw him in a moment, and advanced with her instinctive frankness and courtesy. Her smile was bright and very sweet. Ever since the adventure upon the cliff Wulfrie had been a great favourite of hers.

Wulfrie smiled, too. He did not generally know what to say to young ladies; but with Reinée Dumaresq he always felt at ease, possibly, because she was always perfectly natural and at ease herself.

"So you are the good fairy who has been at work here?" he said. "I was just wondering what had happened."

Reinée looked up at him and spoke quickly and earnestly.

"I only heard about it yesterday. Mrs. Granby told me, and we came here together in the afternoon, and she told me what she

thought was most wanted. You had gone, or we should have consulted you; but I know you will not mind our having used our own discretion. We were afraid to meddle with the diets; but I should so like to bring them something nice, if only I could get to know what would be best. Poor men, they are so dreadfully hurt, some of them."

Reinée's face was full of compassion. She stood there in the midst of much that was rough and uncouth, surrounded by the sad and suffering; and the contrast between the delicate beauty and high-bred refinement of the girl herself and the bareness of all around struck Wulfrie as something at once strange and yet beautiful and appropriate. He could not define the sensation, yet he was conscious of feeling very glad to see Reinée there, looking, despite her loveliness, as much in her right place amongst these sick miners, as she had done in her father's drawing-room. The peculiar adaptiveness of a truly sympathetic unselfish nature struck the young man with new force.

He shook hands cordially with Mrs. Granby, and then turning to Reinée, he said: "If you will allow me, I will make my tour of inspection, and then I will profit by your kind offer and tell you what I can allow my patients to receive at your hands."

"Suppose we come round with you," said Mrs. Granby. "We can note what seems wanted."

Wulfric acceded readily to this suggestion, and the ladies accompanied him and his assistant round the ward. Reinée's skilful, gentle fingers were often in requisition to remove a bandage or change a dressing, and although she had not received any regular training, her quick eye and watchful readiness gave to her the power that is rather born than acquired, of doing the right thing at the right moment.

Reinée, born and reared in luxury, and carefully shielded from everything painful or disagreeable, did not shrink in fear or disgust from what she saw that day. She had not come there with any idea of taking an active part amongst the sufferers, but when she saw that ready hands were needed in their service, it seemed to her not only right, but perfectly natural, that hers should at once be given to the work. Mrs. Granby set the example which she quickly followed, and as the doctors completed their round they congratulated themselves on having gained the services of two very skilful nurses.

His assistant was talking to Mrs. Granby, and Wulfric turned to Reinée. He noted that a little of the soft color had faded from her face. Her eyes looked full of thought.

"I am afraid this has been a little too much for you, Miss Dumaresq. You are not used to such sights and sounds."

She looked up brightly, yet her face was still set in lines of gravity, and her lips expressed a certain tender compassion that was wonderfully sweet.

"No, I am not used to it; but I have liked being here to-day. Dr. Meynal, please tell me the truth, and do not be afraid of hurting my feelings. Can I really be of any use to these poor men? Can I do anything for them myself? Please tell me the truth. I know that girls are often a hindrance and not a help when they come and try to be useful; but if I could——"

She stopped short, and Wulfric answered, gravely and kindly, "Miss Dumaresq, I hardly think it needs me to tell you that true sympathy and consideration are never thrown away, least of all upon the sick and suffering. You have done more good to these poor fellows to-day than I. Do you not see how their eyes follow you about, and how they look at the little gifts that you have brought? Many people might bring them things that can be bought, but you have given them what cannot be purchased with gold, and they have the sense to know it."

Reinée knew herself to be understood, and sudden tears started to her eyes, adding to their soft brightness.

"Thank you," she said, softly. "You know what I mean; but they think too much of it, and you, too. It is so little, so little that I can do, and their gratitude makes me feel ashamed, almost."

Wulfrie smiled.

"Much and little are comparative terms; it does not seem little to them. Their lives are not like yours—a little brightness goes a long way."

"I know, I know—it seems so hard to understand. Why do some have so much, and some so little?"

"I suppose because he who made man and the world has ordained it so. Possibly in part to teach us what we owe to one another."

Reinée was silent. It was a subject on which she had thought much of late, and she would like to have heard what such a man as Wulfrie Meynal had to say upon it; but it was hardly now the time or place, and her older companion was beginning to look tired.

"Then I may come again?" she said, as she held out her hand in farewell. "May I come every day? And will you always let me know what is wanted, so that I may come provided?"

"You may certainly come, and the oftener the better for my patients' sakes," answered Wulfrie, "but I think you will find every day rather a tax upon your powers."

Reinée smiled, but made no reply. She was not given to protestations; yet there was more tenacity of purpose about her than in many who professed more.

As the carriage drove away, Reinée turned to her companion and said: "I am so very, very much obliged to you for bringing me. I have been very happy, although it was so sad."

"We will go there regularly, if you wish it, my dear," answered Mrs. Granby, smiling. "You can hardly go alone, but you can always command my services when you need them. Poor fellows, they were very grateful and pleased to see visitors."

"Yes, and are they not brave and patient, lying there in that bare place? Think how we should feel! Oh, I am glad we went!"

Wulfrie, after handing the ladies to their carriage and watching it roll away, fell into a deep reverie.

"Ah!" he said to himself at length, drawing a deep breath, "if there were more women like that in the world, it would be a happier place than it is."

Reinée kept her promise faithfully, and the poor maimed miners lying in the bare shed had reason to bless the day when the young lady from the Hall first visited them there.

They did not bless her merely for the comforts that she brought them, though these were keenly appreciated and gratefully received; but what they valued far more were the sweet smiles and gentle words she had for each, the sense that she was their friend and really cared for them, and visited them not merely out of compassion, but because she felt a true interest in them, and liked to be there bringing sunshine and light with her. The rough fellows could not have put the thought into words; but it was in each one of their hearts, and not one amongst them but would gladly have laid down his life to serve or help her.

Clive often accompanied his sister, and Mrs. Granby was always of the party. Mrs. Dumaresq sent little delicacies to the wounded men, and her husband afforded substantial assistance to their families. Reinée was very grateful to both her parents, and her mother smiled a little to herself as she thought of the length of time that this new "phase" had lasted, and concluded that unless strengthened by opposition, it must of necessity soon die out.

It amused her to watch Clive and Reinée

playing the parts of almoner or sister of mercy to the sick and poor. It was a pretty little game of which they would soon tire, and then would come the reaction that would lead them to plunge the more readily into the gay life that awaited them beyond the walls of this quiet home.

Mrs. Dumaresq was a clever woman of the world, and believed that she knew her children thoroughly, and could count with absolute accuracy upon their future conduct. Reinée's increase of gentle sweetness was not lost upon her, and she thought she read its meaning very clearly. She felt her girlhood slipping away, the deeper feelings of the heart were rising within her, and she was betraying unconsciously the happiness that she felt in the thought of the future opening before her.

All this was most satisfactory to Mrs. Dumaresq; she could look with indulgent toleration upon Reinée's present occupations, and avoid any apparent disapprobation of her pursuits. She was sorry that Arthur Trevelyan had gone away without the ratification of the tacit engagement that bound him and her daughter together; but she knew nothing of what had passed between him and Reinée, and she was not a woman to be disturbed by trifles. She knew that he was very much in love, and that

he would not be long in returning to claim the hand he looked upon as his by right.

Meantime she was in no hurry to lose her daughter, who was very dear to her. For with all the wants and the hardness of her nature, Mrs. Dumaresq loved her children with every fibre of her being.

But it was not very long before the mother's eyes were to be opened to a state of affairs which caused her a great deal of anxiety and annoyance, and went far towards upsetting the well-balanced theories that had hitherto given her so much satisfaction.

The first shock she received was in a conversation she had with Clive. He was driving his mother out one day, as he did from time to time, and she began to talk upon a subject on which she thought that she and her son were in complete accord.

"When do you think of asking Arthur Trevelyan down again, Clive? You must be sadly dull here with no companion but your sister."

"Reinée and I are never dull," answered Clive, loyally. "She is a queen of a girl."

"I admit that fully; but a young man always wants companions of his own tastes and pleasures."

"Well, there's Meynal, you know. I see a

good bit of him. I don't know if he isn't quite as much to my taste as Trevelyan."

"The young doctor! My dear Clive, what are you talking about? He is quite a common young man!"

"Pardon me, my dear mother, he is a very uncommon young man."

"He is hardly a gentleman even."

"I beg your pardon again. He may not have that outward polish and address, of which, to tell the truth, I am sometimes a little tired; but he is a gentleman to his heart's core, and what is more, he is a man—and that is no small recommendation in my opinion."

Mrs. Dumaresq lifted her eyebrows.

"Well, you ought to know best; though I was never prepossessed by him: but we must not speak against him, as he did you good service one day."

"Saved my life only," Clive, said.

"Well, that is putting it strongly. Saved you from an awkward accident, at any rate."

"Yes, and at the risk of his life."

Mrs. Dumaresq smiled.

"Well, if you are determined to make a hero of him, I will say no more. But you have not answered my question about Arthur Trevelyan."

"What of him?"

"When do you think of asking him down here again?"

"Oh, I don't know. I am in no hurry about it. He took himself off rather cavalierly last time. I don't particularly yearn for his society, you know."

"You did not quarrel with him?"

"No," answered Clive, laughingly. "I never quarrel with anybody."

"You will have him for the shooting, I suppose?"

"I doubt it. The covers are in a shocking state; and nobody about here preserves, as far as I can make out. I shall have to go away for what shooting I want; I can see that pretty clearly. As for asking any fellows here to shoot, it would be ridiculous. They would not thank you for it. Besides, my father isn't up to having people in the house yet."

"No, except Arthur."

"Why Arthur, in particular?"

"My dear boy, you know that as well as I do. He is like one of the family."

"I don't see that now. He used always to be with us a few years ago; but lately we haven't seen much of him."

"Well, that will be soon mended now. We

shall see a great deal of him in the future, I hope."

There was no mistaking Mrs. Dumaresq's meaning, Clive had fenced long enough. He ceased to do so now.

"That depends upon Reinée," he answered, flicking a fly from the flank of the off-horse with his whip; and his face was rather grave and set.

Mrs. Dumaresq glanced quickly at him.

"Reinée's mind has been made up long ago."

"Possibly; but which way?"

"I cannot imagine what you mean, Clive." Mrs. Dumaresq spoke with more heat of manner than was at all usual with her. "Reinée has been engaged to Arthur Trevelyan ever since she was a child."

"Those engagements made for girls by other people do not always come to anything in the end, you know, my dear mother."

"I wonder what you are driving at, Clive. Are you trying to tease me, or have you some real grounds for what you say? Has Reinée been talking to you—or Arthur?"

"Trevelyan is not a talking man, and Reinée has hardly exchanged half-a-dozen sentences with me on the subject; but I have eyes in my head."

"So have I. Reinée seems to me to show very plainly how her feelings are going."

"Just what I say, too."

"But your conclusion is——?"

"That she does not even like Trevelyan--let alone love altogether."

"Nonsense, Clive! Impossible!"

"Well, that is my opinion, if you want it."

"Impossible!" repeated Mrs. Dumaresq. "She cannot possibly have any fault to find with him; Arthur has always been irreproachable."

"Query there," returned Clive, coolly.

His mother turned upon him quickly.

"You know nothing to his discredit?"

"Not in the sense you mean; only in the sense in which Reinée meant it, when she told me one day that he was not a good man."

"Reinée said that?"

"Yes; and I believe she is quite right."

Mrs. Dumaresq bit her lip, but she did not allow her annoyance to betray itself.

"Did Reinée mean by that that he did not share her newly developed religious and philanthropic views!"

"I did not discuss the point; I think we both felt alike. I do not know that I could

easily define what we mean by a good man; but I am convinced that Trevelyan is not one."

Mrs. Dumaresq looked hard at her son.

"You, too, Clive! This is rather too much."

"What, mother?"

"That you should be led by Reinée into her last foolish craze."

"I was not aware that she had one."

Mrs. Dumaresq was silent for awhile. Presently she turned to her son and asked, quietly:

"Do not affect to misunderstand me, Clive. Just tell me plainly what all this means."

The young man was looking out straight before him. His likeness to Reinée was more than usually marked just then: yet there was a masculine resolution and purpose in his face that gave it a power not generally seen there. His mother glanced sideways at him, saw the clear outline of his profile against the blue sky, and she could not but say to herself: "What a handsome fellow he is! He ought to have been in the army. He looks every inch a soldier."

Clive's answer was somewhat long in coming, but it came at length, clear and to the point.

"I think, mother, it means that Reinée and I have both reached the conclusion that this

world is not the only one for which we have to live."

"Well?"

"And that it is of the other life that it is, after all, most important to think."

"*Après?*"

Mrs. Dumaresq was not going to make her son's task any easier; but he was not disconcerted by these little dry questions.

"I think," he answered, very quietly, "that when we come to change the short life here for the one that will meet us in the great hereafter, things will assume altogether different proportions from what they do now—the great will be small, the small great. I hardly know how to make myself intelligible to you; but I know what my own idea is. I should like my life to be laid down upon lines that will not look altogether mean and unworthy when the great day of awakening comes—the day that we generally call death."

Mrs. Dumaresq sat perfectly still. Never from the hour of his childhood had she ever heard her son speak after any fashion of this kind. She had believed him to share her own indifferent conventional carelessness upon all subjects connected with the spiritual life. To hear him speak in this way now produced a curious and paralysing effect upon her.

"And who, pray, has taught you these extraordinary views?"

"I hardly know; they do not seem to me extraordinary. They have been floating in my head for a good while. I think Reinée has helped to give them definite form."

After a pause his mother said, rather sharply, "It is a great pity Reinée ever left London."

"Why?"

"Oh, you would not understand—you encourage her in her folly. It is plain she is getting quite spoilt."

"You said only yesterday that she was sweeter every day, and I am sure it is true."

"She is improved in some ways, I admit; but—but—well, we shall see."

"See what?"

Mrs. Dumaresq said rather impatiently,

"See what it all comes to. I have always found Reinée dutiful and obedient so far."

"You will not find her less so now, unless, indeed——"

Clive paused there.

"Unless what?"

"Unless you try to push authority beyond its legitimate bounds."

Mrs. Dumaresq had by this time recovered her self-command, and could speak with her usual composure.

"I am not given to being unreasonable," she said. "I have no intention of being so now."

In a very thoughtful mood she descended from the carriage and reached her own room.

"This begins to look serious," she said to herself, "but possibly it is all a passing enthusiasm. I will give her line a little longer, and then I must begin to work in earnest."

CHAPTER XVIII.

GERALD.

GERALD MEYNAL left home with a sense of triumphant exultation and independence. He had managed very well, he told himself; he had avoided all "scenes" with the women folk, and had shifted on to Wulf's broad shoulders the blame of the step, should blame attach to it.

He had no intention of plunging into dissipation or vice. He believed in himself and in his own power of stopping short whenever he choose. He had a boyish admiration for Hector Thompson, and with him for a companion, and money in his pocket, he felt quite at peace with himself and the world.

The money he had ostentatiously displayed before his brother's eyes was not all his own, as a matter of fact. Still, he had had that fatal luck that so often lures the young gambler on to his destruction, and he felt a confidence in his own good fortune that made him start upon his travels with an easy mind and a buoyant sense of hope and pleasure.

Some day he would settle down steadily to

work, but for a time, at least, he intended to enjoy himself.

He slept that night at Ayleester, and the day was far advanced before he rose. He telegraphed to Hector Thompson to tell him his whereabouts, and ask him to join him; and then, as he was wondering what he should do with the time upon his hands, he recollected that Juliet was a nurse at the County Infirmary, and he thought he could not do better than to go and see her, and tell her all about himself.

Perhaps one of the best traits in the young man's character was a capacity for affection that was more than a mere transitory emotion. None of his own near relations had inspired him with this affection, which is often not drawn out towards those that are nearest to us in blood; but he was sincerely fond of Juliet Granby, and had been so from the days of their childhood. Whoever else changed towards him, Juliet was always his friend and admirer.

Juliet had always stood to her colors and had always believed in him. That might not be a very elevated basis on which to erect friendship or affection, but in this case it had proved a very solid one, and had stood the test of time without crumbling or quaking.

Gerald could not get on without admiration. It was as necessary to him as the air he breathed. A friend who could stand, as it were, aloof, and criticise him, in however kindly a spirit, could be no friend to him. He shrank from and resented such a course of action with curious and vehement distaste. If people could not like and admire him and be blind to his faults, he would have nothing more to do with them.

In proportion as he turned from those who, as he expressed it, "failed him," so he valued increasingly the friends upon whom he could depend; and foremost amongst these stood Juliet Granby.

So he went up the steps of the infirmary and boldly asked to see the girl. After explaining to Mrs. Martin that he had known her all his life, that he was Dr. Meynal's brother, and had just come from St. Hilda, and wished to say good-bye to her before leaving that part of the country altogether, he was shown into the nurse's parlor, which at that hour was quite empty, and was told that Nurse Granby should come to him there as soon as her duties would allow of it.

Gerald stood at the window, staring down into the dull quadrangle formed by the great building. He felt depressed by the atmosphere

of the place, and the silence of the long, upper corridors that were tenantless now.

"How can she take to a place like this—with her ideas, too—so like my own? Women are past comprehension. St. Hilda was dull, I admit, but the dismal dulness of a life in a prison-like place such as this!—it must be something awful!"

Then, turning quickly at the sound of a step behind him, he found himself face to face with Juliet in her nurse's garb.

"Gerald!" she exclaimed, "I could not imagine who it could be. How good of you to come."

"I could not go away without saying good-bye to you, Juliet."

"Are you going away, then? Where?"

"Eventually to London; but I dare say I shall go and see the world a little first. We have both cut ourselves adrift from the old life, you see, Juliet. I wonder who will have the best time of it. How do you like your choice?"

"Well, middling; it was not exactly my choice, Gerald, but the only thing I could manage. I think it is better than St. Hilda, but the people are dreadfully sordid and common, and there is a great deal to put up with. I suppose they are jealous of any one

a little superior to themselves, and are determined to keep them from rising. It seems like it, anyhow; but they will not keep me in subjection long; as soon as I have a little more knowledge and experience, I will assert myself, and show what I can do."

This interview took place before Juliet had been many weeks in the hospital—before her temporary elevation and sudden fall.

"That is right, Juliet. Never you allow yourself to be put upon. It never answers. I have been much too easy-going myself; but I have asserted myself at last, and Wulf will find that he cannot trample on me with impunity."

"What has Wulfric done?" asked Juliet.

So Gerald told his story in his own way, and she listened with great interest and sympathy.

"And so you have really left home for good? Oh, Gerald, how I envy you! If only I had talents like yours, and could be free to go where I would and make myself great and famous! How I shall look out for notices in the papers about you. I wonder what you will do first to made yourself known. Which of your pictures have you taken away with you?"

Gerald laughed a little constrainedly. He

did not quite know how to explain to Juliet that it was not by his art that he meant to rise in the first place to affluence and importance. He had a strange shrinking from in any way lowering himself in her eyes. After all, why should he? she could not understand him. She was but an inexperienced woman.

"Oh, I can have my pictures sent after me when I have got a studio to put them in; but I may not settle down all at once. I mean to travel about first for a time. I am not sure that I shall not go to Italy."

Juliet clasped her hands in sympathetic delight.

"Oh, Gerald! how lovely! But—but—if you have quarreled with Wulf and have gone away without leave from any one, how will you get the money to go?"

Gerald smiled mysteriously.

"Oh, I have the money safe enough. I made that myself."

"You have sold a picture!" cried the girl, with sparkling eyes, "one of your great pictures. You are famous already. Some dealer has heard of you, and has come down to buy your work! Tell me all about it, Gerald! You don't know how pleased I am!"

Gerald was smiling still in his rather provoking fashion. He did not mean exactly to be deceitful, but this sort of thing was very pleasant to his vanity. He could not forego the pleasure of enjoying it.

"Come now, Juliet, don't be so importunate. You know I don't care about blowing my own trumpet. I've got the money—that is the great thing—and I can go to Italy or anywhere else that I choose. It is a very jolly feeling to know that one is independent, and that there is more to be made as soon as funds get low."

Juliet smiled triumphantly.

"Did not I say you would be rich and famous one day? I always knew it!"

"You always stood by me, so, of course, I came to you first with the tale of my good luck."

"Don't they know at home?"

"I told Wulfrie I had money, but I did not specify how I came by it. I dare say he thinks I stole it, and am now flying from the pursuit of justice," and Gerald laughed gaily, Juliet joining.

"Wulfrie is no judge of art, and Barbara's opinions, no doubt, influence him. Barbara never understood you. How small she will feel when this all comes out."

Gerald began to feel a little small himself, and attempted to change the conversation.

"Never mind, Barbara; she means well, and so does old Wulf. I suppose they can't help being rather obstinate and unreasonable. Look here, Juliet, you'll always stand my friend, won't you? I dare say you will hear some hard things of me when you go back; but I should like to feel that I had a friend in you."

He spoke with more earnestness and feeling than was usual with him, and Juliet, herself somewhat lonely and unhappy, was touched by it.

"Indeed, Gerald, I will," she answered. "You have always been my friend; when I was unhappy and other people laughed, you understood and stood up for me. We have the same ideas of life. We cannot be content to rust out our existence in a narrow, petty little village. Oh, yes, Gerald, I will always stand up for you. I will fight your battle when you are not there to fight it for yourself."

He looked at her affectionately, and laid his hand upon hers.

"You are a good girl, Juliet. You are something like a friend."

Tears were very near Juliet's eyes, but she kept them back, and answered, with assumed

gaiety, "And we will show them that we are right, after all, Gerald. People are very fond of talking as if it were very wicked to want one's own way, and to get it; but we will show their mistake and follow. You and I have each taken our own way to a certain extent, and we will prove to the world how well it will turn out!"

Gerald looked on his companion with a smile that was a little uncertain, comparing his own purposes with those of this girl beside him—this girl whose very garb bespoke that her vocation was to minister to the sick and suffering, and to give up her youthful pleasures, her time and strength, in a noble labor of love. Juliet might be headstrong and unwise in the way in which she set about her tasks, but surely she was more truly wise than he. At least, she could ask a blessing upon her labors, but could he do the same?

Gerald was not wont to moralise thus, yet such thoughts as these struggled through his mind during Juliet's last speech, and gave him an uneasy twinge. He started up, determined to get rid of them as quickly as possible.

"Well, good-bye, Juliet; I was told not to stay long. I have a great deal to do and to think about. I am glad I have seen you. I shall always look back to it with pleasure, and

I shall write sometimes to tell you how I get on. Think well of me, Juliet, always, wish me well, and remember me in your prayers. Good-bye,—next time we meet we ought to have a good deal to say to one another."

He spoke hastily, and was gone almost before the words had passed his lips; and Juliet, with a softer and tenderer feeling at her heart, went back to her work in her ward.

So Gerald vanished from his home and from St. Hilda, and his mother wept for him, and laid the blame upon her other son, and pined for news that so seldom came, whilst doubt and trouble preyed upon her health.

Wulfrie took her undeserved reproaches very quietly and patiently, and as time passed by he began to feel that his mother, despite her fretful words, leaned upon him and clung to him in an unconscious way that roused the love and tenderness within him to more active life.

Barbara sometimes noticed this, too, and would speak of it with a happy light in her eyes, and Wulfrie would flush with pleasure, and say in his deep, gentle voice—"Poor little mother!"

Barbara was very happy in those days, dull and monotonous as they appeared to outsiders. She had not struggled in vain

during all these long months. She had not marked her progress day by day and hour by hour, yet when she looked back to the time succeeding her father's death, she could see how many victories had been won. She was never irritable now with the ailing mother, whose fretfulness had tried her so hardly once. She had drawn a little nearer the sister who had once been such a stranger to her, and she had begun to realise that Celia, too, had her own troubles, hopes and fears, little as she showed them; Barbara felt quite certain that the visible devotion of Mr. Leslie, had touched her sister's heart, although she was struggling against its influence, in the deep-seated desire to "make a good match," and marry a rich man.

There was no doubt about Hector Thompson's admiration for Celia; but Barbara had never liked him, and since his influence had led Gerald to leave home for months together, and ignore all his mother's piteous appeals to return, even Celia had seemed displeased, and had looked grave and abstracted when his name was mentioned. Yet Celia was weak, as her sister well knew, and she feared for the effect of any personal influence that might be brought to bear upon her, and Hector's sisters always treated her almost as if she were one of themselves.

Fergus Thompson was a constant visitor during this time, when so much anxiety was being experienced about Gerald. It almost seemed as if he tried to take the place of the absent son and brother; and the keen sense of regret—almost of shame—that he felt with regard to Hector's conduct proved very plainly how little he thought his brother was to be trusted.

Barbara learned more from him of the dangers to which Gerald was likely to be exposed, than she did from any other source. It was a relief to both to talk freely on a subject that was shunned in ordinary conversation; and as Fergus and Barbara had known each other from childhood, it was the easier for them to speak freely of those so nearly related to them.

Fergus, too, began to talk to Barbara of his own plans and prospects. He was getting on well, he said, and this report was confirmed by others, who spoke of the young engineer as a man likely to rise in his profession.

And very gradually Barbara began to understand the drift of these confidences, and to know that a new element was stealing into her life and sweetening it in a wonderful and inexplicable way.

She did not let herself give too much

prominence to this new sense of happiness. She took it humbly, gratefully, without questioning too closely its nature, and she busied herself about her work as earnestly as ever, and was glad to think that Fergus took so much interest in it, and always spoke with kindly sympathy of the poor and needy, whose wants she tried to relieve.

And Fergus would talk to her softly sometimes of the mother he had lost, whose teaching he had never forgotten, and Barbara knew, by the way he spoke of that and of her, that he, at least, would understand her aspirations, and help, not hinder, her in the path she fain would tread. This conviction brought with it an added sense of happiness.

So days and weeks slipped by. October had come and had almost gone when the news came that Hector and Gerald had reached London, and the former was very anxious for his father to fulfil a half-formed promise of taking a house there for some six or nine months, and letting the girls see something of life.

Of course, Georgina and Harriet were enchanted at the prospect, and Mr. Thompson, who was a good-natured, easy going man, was not proof against the pressure brought to bear upon him on all sides. He rather liked

the sense of importance that would be conferred upon him by a residence in the metropolis, and Hector was instructed to look out for a suitable house in a convenient and central locality.

Barbara felt relieved when she heard of this plan. She thought that Gerald would have had a kind of home at the house of these friends, even if he did not live beneath their roof; and she hoped that their presence so near would stimulate him to work, and so justify the promise of future greatness which they had one and all accorded to him.

Fergus, however, did not evince any enthusiasm over the plan, and he sought occasion to speak to Wulfrie in private.

"I hear," he said, "that your sister Celia is to be asked to join the party and spend a good deal of time in town. If you take my advice you will not let her go."

Wulfrie looked up quickly.

"Why not?"

"I suppose you know that my brother Hector admires her very much, and my family are anxious to forward the marriage, as they have an idea that it would 'steady him.' For my part, I have no faith in the steadying process built on no more secure foundation than that; and though he is my brother, I

must frankly say that I believe his wife would be a very unhappy and neglected woman."

Wulfrie drew his brows together, as he had a way of doing when perplexed.

"You are frank with me, and I will be the same with you. You know almost more of my sisters than I do myself. Do you think Celia would be in any danger? Do you think she cares for him?"

"I do not think her heart is touched in the least: but she is easily worked upon, and—pardon my saying it—she is susceptible to admiration and flattery. I believe if she were to pay this visit, she would engage herself without much serious consideration, that is what my sisters reckon upon, I fear."

Wulfrie looked serious. He was very much of the same mind himself.

"I am much obliged to you for putting me on my guard," he said. "I will take care that Celia does not go."

"You will do wisely," answered Fergus. "Hector is not the man to make a good husband. Sometimes I have very grave fears what will become of him."

Wulfrie knew something of those fears himself; he said nothing more, however, and Fergus shook him by the hand and departed.

Two days later, when he entered the

drawing-room late on in the evening, he was aware of an unusual flutter and excitement in the manner of his mother and sisters. Celia was flushed, and looked unusually lovely. Mrs. Meynal was tremulous and a little agitated, and Barbara looked perplexed and excited.

"How late you are, Wulfrie!" exclaimed his mother; "you are always so late when we want you especially."

"I have been very busy all day, mother," he answered, gently. "Well, what is this important matter under discussion?"

"Celia is going to London with the Thompsons next week. She will see Gerald—it is such a relief to me. I wish they were going at once. She must have some money, Wulfrie. I want you to write a cheque for £50, she will want a great many new things before she goes."

Wulfrie sat quite still for a few minutes gazing in the fire. Barbara looked at him keenly, but nobody else understood the reason of his silence.

"You don't congratulate me, Wulf," said Celia, playfully, she was in unusually high spirits to-night. "You don't say what a fortunate girl you think me for having the chance given me of a long visit to London."

Wulfrie got up and stood with his back to the fire, there was something in his look and his gesture that aroused the attention of the onlookers.

"Celia," he said, "I don't like to disappoint you, but I cannot sanction this journey to London."

A quick flush rose in Celia's cheek; for a moment she looked curiously like Gerald.

"Then I must go without your sanction," she answered, with a slightly scornful inflexion in her tone.

"Pardon me for contradicting you, Celia, but I must tell you plainly that this visit is not to be paid."

She drew herself up haughtily.

"And pray, by what right do you lay down the law to me like this?"

"I have no wish to lay down the law, I would much rather persuade you, if it were possible."

"I am afraid your powers are unequal to the task; I mean to go, and I defy you to show me a single good reason why I should not do so."

"I can show you a good many, Celia. In the first place, these friends of yours intend to lead a life of continual gaiety and dissipation, and as our father has not been dead more than

six months, it would be unseemly for you to share in these pleasures, and you would hardly care to be excluded——”

“Nobody in town would know,” interrupted Celia, quickly.

“You would know yourself,” returned Wulfrie, with rather cutting emphasis, and with a gleam in his eye that Barbara felt she should hardly care to encounter; and then passing on, quickly to the next point, he added, very gravely: “It is due to the direct influence of Hector Thompson that Gerald has become what, I fear, he now is. It is unseemly and indeed, intolerable that you should go about with a family, in terms of close intimacy, to one member of which we owe a debt of that kind. I cannot and I will not sanction your meeting young Thompson as a guest beneath his father’s roof.”

Mrs. Meynal was dissolved in tears, and sobbed without any attempt to speak. Barbara felt a great respect and admiration for her brother, whilst Celia looked a little pale as she drew herself haughtily up.

“And suppose I go in spite of you?”

“You cannot do that,” he answered, coolly, “for I have the purse strings.”

“You are ungenerous!” she flashed out, hotly.

"I am not so willingly; but upon this point you will find me inflexible."

He waited to hear if she had anything more to say, and as she remained mute and indignant, he turned to quit the room.

"You have my ultimatum," he said, quietly. "If I can make up to you in any other way for the disappointment, I shall be very glad to do so," and then he quitted the room without waiting for a reply.

CHAPTER XIX.

BARBARA'S MISSION.

"CELIA," said Barbara, "do you mind very much giving up this London visit?"

Celia flushed a little, looked somewhat inclined to resent the question, for she and Barbara were not given to confiding in one another.

"I do not chose to be dictated to by Wulf," answered she, after a short pause.

Barbara did not look angry as she would once have done. She only said, gently, "Wulf is very fond of you, Celia. He is only thinking of your happiness."

"My happiness?" questioned Celia, rather haughtily.

Barbara came and knelt down beside her sister. Since a new sense of love and happiness had begun to steal into her own heart, she had felt more tenderly towards Celia than ever in her life before, and had more of comprehension and sympathy for her than she would once have believed possible.

"Dear Celia," she said, softly, "you know what I mean. You know what would have

happened if you had gone to London. And Wulf thinks—other people think—that—that it would not have been for your happiness.”

Celia's color had risen a little. Barbara could not tell from her manner whether or not she was angry; but at any rate she seemed willing to discuss the matter.

“Do you not think it best for other people to mind their own business, and to keep from interfering in affairs not their own?”

Barbara did not answer at once, but looked earnestly into her sister's face and asked, “Do you really care for him, Celia?”

“What right have you to ask such a question?” asked Celia, rather sharply.

“None, perhaps,” replied Barbara, with unwonted humility; “only you know we are sisters—and—and—well, I cannot quite believe you could.”

“Why not, pray?”

“Because—because—Celia, dear, let me say it, for I cannot help having heard and seen a good deal all these weeks. You must have compared them in your own mind, and I cannot think that the comparison can be in Hector's favor.”

Celia's flush had deepened now.

“And who may the other be, with whom I must have compared Hector? Your favorite Fergus?”

"No," answered Barbara, her glance not wavering, "I was not thinking of him."

"Of whom, then?"

"Of Mr. Leslie."

"What makes you drag his name in?" asked Celia, with affected indifference.

"Because he loves you," answered Barbara, softly yet firmly. "Hector admires and likes you; but Mr. Leslie loves you."

Celia was silent for a time, and then she looked up and asked with a sort of affected scorn: "And you think I am so suited to be a poor clergyman's wife, that you must advocate his cause? Really, Barbara, you are too absurd!"

"Why should you not make a good clergyman's wife, Celia?" she asked. "If—if you loved him, I am almost sure you would."

Celia affected to laugh, but she did not meet her sister's pleading glance.

"If I did—a very safe if, Barbara; and if not?"

Barbara made no answer; but Celia's face had said more than her words, and it gave her sister courage to speak more decidedly.

"I believe you will love him, Celia; I believe you are beginning to do so already."

Celia suddenly rose from her seat, and moved away to the window with hasty steps.

"I do not want to love him," she answered, with sudden vehemence, such as Barbara had never heard before from her lips. "I do not wish to be a poor man's wife, or a clergyman's wife. I want to be rich and to live at my ease—it is all I am fit for. That is why I want to go to London. If I did that; if I were to get away from this place and from everybody, things would arrange themselves just as I wish. I had made up my mind—I hate to be baulked. Wulf had no right to stop me. I can't trust myself now. I don't know what may happen if I stay here; I shall do something foolish and sentimental and regret it all my life afterwards. And when it is too late he will find out his mistake, too. Why will he persist in thinking me utterly different from what I am?"

Celia stood with her back to her sister and spoke with a freedom and rapidity quite unusual with her. She revealed more of the struggle that had been going on within her than she had any intention of doing, and Barbara's eyes shone with sisterly sympathy and satisfaction in what she heard.

With sudden confidence that almost surprised herself, she said: "Perhaps he knows you better than you know yourself, Celia, or than we know you. I sometimes think that love

is not blind, but very, very far-seeing. I think, perhaps, Mr. Leslie judges you more truly than you judge yourself."

Celia stood quite still for several minutes, and neither sister broke the silence, then she turned suddenly and came forward and kissed Barbara on both cheeks. It was almost the first spontaneous caress that had ever been exchanged between them since their nursery days.

"If I had tried to be more like you, Barbara, instead of despising and thwarting you, I should be a better woman than I am now."

"Oh, Celia!" cried Barbara, with real distress in her tones. "Don't talk like that, please! If you only knew how ashamed I have been at the way I have so often gone on. I have always been so cross and hasty. You must not praise me. It makes me so ashamed!"

Celia smiled with unwonted sweetness.

"Very well, Barbara, we will neither praise nor blame ourselves, nor each other, but let by-gones be by-gones. In the future, I think we shall understand one another better."

It was with a softened feeling at heart that Barbara left her sister's room. It had been something of an effort to broach the subject to her; but she was more than rewarded

for that effort, and felt that Celia's confidence would not in the future be altogether withdrawn. The ice had been broken and a sense of sisterly sympathy established between them.

A little time before, Barbara would have urged Celia to make it up with Wulfrie, and tell him that she did not resent his interference in the proposed scheme, but she had learned wisdom and toleration of late, and was less eager to exact from others the demonstrations of good will that came so readily from her own impulsive temperament. She began to see that silence and forbearance could do more towards smoothing matters down than all the urging and pleading in the world.

And Barbara had her reward. For one evening about a week later, when Wulfrie came to pay his usual visit to his mother, it was evident that Celia had something to say to him.

Since his refusal to allow her to go to town, he had been regarded with great coldness and disfavor by her, and had had to bear much murmuring and complaining from his mother, who seemed to think that her daughter's future was being sacrificed to his caprice.

Wulfrie took all this with his accustomed outward *sang froid*, yet it cut him a good deal, and the lines began to deepen in his face, and he looked often an older man than he had

done less than a year ago, when he had come home for the first time after his father's death.

He looked more worn to-night than usual, for he had had a hard day's work, and felt the less able to encounter reproach or complaint.

But as it chanced he had not to encounter either, for when he had seated himself beside his mother's couch, Celia came and stood beside the fire, looking down at him and saying, gently, "Are you tired to-night, Wulf? you look so."

It was so unusual for Celia to trouble herself to make inquiries like these that Wulfrie looked up quickly.

"I have had a good hard day of it," he answered. "It makes the evening's rest very welcome."

"Don't you think you are in danger of doing too much, sometimes?" pursued Celia. "You must not knock yourself up, Wulf; I do not know what we should do now without your wise, kind, capable head over us all."

If Celia spoke with an effort, at least it was not apparent. Her voice was low and clear as usual, but it had lost its intonation of languid indifference, and her face was softer and brighter in its expression.

Mrs. Meynal had a way of taking her cue

from her idolized Celia, and now she broke in with eager insistence, "Indeed, no, Wulfrie. My dear boy, do take care of yourself. I have lost one son; I cannot spare the other."

Wulfrie laid his hand upon his mother's and looked at her with a smile.

"All right, little mother, you need not be afraid. No chance of getting rid of me. I am quite a fixture on the property."

And then he glanced up at Celia, as if conscious that she had more to say, nor was he mistaken.

"I want to thank you, Wulfrie," she said, "for standing so firm about my journey to London. I am so very glad you did not let me go."

"Thank you, Celia," he said, rising and standing beside her. "It is very kind of you to tell me this."

She smiled a little.

"I was ready enough to tell you when I was annoyed and angry. It would hardly have been fair not to be ready to admit that circumstances had changed."

"And they have?"

"Yes. I would not go to town now for anything. I am most grateful to you for holding me back."

He stood by her, laying his hand on her

shoulder in brotherly fashion, and looking straight into her eyes.

"Thank you," he said again.

Celia was silent, her color rising slowly. Then she looked up at her brother, and said, in a low tone, "Wulfric, will you sanction my engagement with Frank Leslie? He is coming to see you some time to-morrow."

Wulfric's hand pressed her shoulder with sympathetic clasp. He, too, lowered his voice, yet what passed was audible to the others in the room.

"What have you said to him yourself, Celia?"

"I said I would marry him, subject to your approval," answered Celia. "I would rather have that before binding myself. I trust your judgment of men and things more than my own."

Wulfric smiled the peculiarly sweet and brotherly smile that was not often called forth, and touched her forehead lightly with his lips.

"You love him, Celia?"

"I—think—so. Yes, I am sure I love him; but I wish to be guided by your opinion. I will not again go against your wishes."

"My wishes are that you may be happy, my dear sister," said Wulfric, very gently; "and

if I am any judge of men, Leslie is one to make you happy."

"I think so," she answered. "I have not known him very long, but I think——"

"That he is worthy of you," concluded Wulfrie. "I trust it may be so. I think that you will be happy, and I am convinced that you will make the happiness of his life."

Something bright was shining on Celia's lashes; she said, rather tremulously, "I hope so—I will try; but I do not know. I am very weak. Wulfrie, I am very sorry I treated you so badly for so long."

"You never treated me badly, Celia," he answered, with a smile.

"I did," she persisted. "Perhaps you were too generous to know it, but I did. I was often ashamed of myself, but I had not learned——" Celia stopped short, paused for several seconds, and then, lifting her face for his brotherly kiss, she concluded, with almost childish simplicity, "I mean to try very hard to be good."

All this had passed so quickly that the mother and sister hardly realised its import. But when Celia turned away, and knelt down beside Mrs. Meynal's couch to whisper the open secret to her, Wulfrie and Barbara slipped away, and as they stood in the hall

together, Barbara could not help taking his hands in hers and giving them a joyful squeeze.

"Oh, Wulf, I am so glad—so glad!"

"So am I. Leslie will make her a good husband. You see, we did her an injustice, Barbara. She did not give her love unworthily."

And Barbara smiled as she answered, "No," and told no word of the struggle that she had witnessed. She would not betray Celia to justify herself, and perhaps Wulfrie knew more than he chose to acknowledge. His eyes were wonderfully keen, and had a way of taking in a great deal that nobody suspected.

But the very peace and harmony that reigned now in that once divided household made the absence and the alienation of the missing one all the more marked. Gerald had almost ceased to write, and his few letters were short, cold, and unsatisfactory. He took no notice of his mother's piteous appeals or his brother's serious remonstrances. He was set on pleasing himself and going his own way, and he did not seem as yet to have tasted the bitterness that lay in the cup he was bent on draining.

Celia wrote of her engagement and begged

him to come home, if only for a visit, to make good his acquaintance with Frank; but no answer was returned; and Barbara, who had once thought of him only with scorn and a sort of lofty compassion, longed ardently to extend to him that sisterly love and confidence that existed now between herself and Celia.

Barbara was learning how good a thing it was to love and be loved, and she felt that it was in part her doing that the home atmosphere had been so stormy in days gone by. She had never tried to smooth away difficulties, or curb the freedom of her impulsive speech, and with the eager generosity of her nature she felt willing now to bear all the blame and to do anything in her power to win Gerald back. If only she could bring him home, it would make amends for all else.

She heard news from Fergus that disquieted her. Gerald hardly ever went to Mr. Thompson's house now. He seemed to be making friends of his own, and to wish to rid himself of the last link that bound him to the old life. So far as they knew he had done no work, and yet it was hardly likely he could support himself upon what his brother continued to allow him—for Wulfrie sent frequent

remittances, though almost against his better judgment, feeling it impossible to allow his brother to want for anything when he himself had enough and to spare—unless he had some means of supplementing his income; for he lived, so far as could be made out, in ease and idleness and luxury, and never appealed to those at home for assistance.

Barbara grew more and more uneasy as time passed on, until at last a bold idea entered her head. She heard that Mrs. Dart, the lawyer's wife, was going up to town for a day on business, to start by an early morning train and get back some time in the evening. Barbara went straight to her, and asked if she might accompany her upon the expedition, and whilst the elder lady attended to her business, contrive herself to catch Gerald at his rooms, and secure a personal interview with him.

Mrs. Dart, who had petted Gerald from his babyhood, and had always hoped to see him a partner in the firm, entered warmly into this scheme; but advised that its real object should be kept a secret in order not to excite Mrs. Meynal, or to give rise to false hopes in others. She invited Barbara as a companion for herself, and not even Wulfrie knew that she cherished the hope of bringing Gerald home with her.

They reached London at eleven o'clock, and Barbara drove straight to her brother's lodgings. The day was cold and ungenial, and the girl hoped that the artist would not have yet gone out; but she was hardly prepared to find him not yet up at half-past eleven, and have to wait a good half-hour in his sitting-room before he made his appearance in dressing-gown and slippers.

He looked exceedingly surprised, and by no means well pleased to see his sister, and his greeting was anything but gracious.

"So you have come up instead of Celia, have you, Bab? The Thompsons never told me that. Why didn't they ask me to meet you at dinner, instead of sending you here at this unearthly hour?"

"I am not visiting the Thompsons," answered Barbara. "I have come up for the day with Mrs. Dart. I came to see you whilst she did some business, Gerald, dear; it is such a long time since any of us saw you."

Gerald's brow cleared a little when he heard that Barbara was not staying in London. He rang for his breakfast, and invited her to take some with him, which she was glad to do, feeling that it made things more sociable and pleasant.

An undefined change had passed over Ger-

ald that she did not like to see, although she could hardly have defined it. His eyes were slightly bloodshot, and his movements uncertain. He was pale and more thin than in old days, and his features wore a sharpened look, as if with the perpetual strain of some unwholesome excitement. His manner was restless, gay to flippancy, and yet to a certain extent embarrassed. He evidently had no suspicion that Barbara's visit to town was entirely on his account, and she could not help fancying that he would have resented it a good deal had he been made aware of the fact.

He talked fast and laughed a good deal. He made hasty inquiries as to mother and sister, but hardly waited for a reply, rattling on about Celia's engagement and affecting a mighty sense of amusement at the choice she had finally made. He seemed to have no appetite, and only played with his food. Body and mind seemed alike in a state of unsatisfactory tension.

Barbara let him talk till he had pretty well exhausted his store of subjects, and had tired himself withal. He lighted a cigar then, and she drew her chair to the fire and nerved herself to the effort she had come to make.

"Gerald," she began, with a certain abruptness that was almost inevitable under the cir-

cumstances, "I want you to go home with me to-day, if you will."

He stared at her in undisguised amazement.

"Why?"

"Because we all want you back. Because you never come when you are asked; and because our mother is pining for a sight of you, and is fretting herself ill on your account."

"Mother is always fretting herself ill about something," answered Gerald, coolly. "There is no reason why she should worry herself about me."

"But she does worry. Do come, Gerald."

"Not I, Barbara," he answered, his face hardening, as it had never hardened in old days. "I was turned out of my home, and I am in no hurry to return, I can tell you."

"Not for the mother's sake, Gerald?" she asked, not attempting the task of an argument.

"Not for anybody's sake," he answered, sharply. "I have tasted freedom and life here, and nothing will induce me to return to rust and vegetate in that little hole."

"I am only asking you to pay us a visit."

"Which I decline to do. You all conspired to drive me from home—you, Barbara, and Wulfrie together made a nice home for me between you—and now you want to whistle me back, and I refuse to come."

It was in vain that Barbara pleaded. Gerald remained obdurate, and at last refused to listen any longer. He turned fierce and resentful, and she saw that more harm than good would be done by prolonging the interview. Gerald, too, looked impatiently at the clock as if he wished her gone. So Barbara, grieved and disappointed, took her leave, and joined Mrs. Dart at the friend's house where they had arranged to meet.

That good lady was sadly put out and troubled by the account the girl gave of her unsuccessful mission, and of the way in which Gerald had impressed her.

The journey home in the short, fading daylight was silent and rather gloomy. Mrs. Dart shared in Barbara's depression: but she did not know that the thought which most troubled the girl's mind was this: "If I had been different in old days; if I had been more patient, more good-tempered, and less scornful and hasty, perhaps Gerald would have listened to me now. Perhaps we might all have loved one another more, and the home have been too happy a one for him to wish to leave it. Oh, if only I could live those years of my life over again, how different I would try to make them!"

CHAPTER XX.

AT THE HALL.

THE autumn at the Hall had passed peacefully and uneventfully away. Clive and Mrs. Dumaresq had both of them been from home at different times, the young man to shoot, and his mother to visit one or two relatives, who had pressed her somewhat importunately not to bury herself alive forever.

Mr. Dumaresq had not felt equal to the exertion of leaving home, but had urged his wife to do so, saying that he and Reinée were quite capable of taking care of one another.

Reinée had had many and pressing invitations from different quarters, but, she had not been tempted away by any of them. She was very happy in her quiet home, and her life was full of little cares and interests that had become more to her than ever the old gaieties had done.

So she and her father spent a great part of October and November alone together, enlivened from time to time by Clive's bright presence, but for the most part dependent upon

each other for company and amusement; and during those quiet days, tinged with that nameless sadness that follows the footsteps of the dying year, father and daughter drew very near together.

Mr. Dumaresq had never been what is termed a religious man, and yet had a vein of serious speculation in his nature, and a reverence for sacred themes and ordinances that both his children had inherited. His marriage with a handsome heiress, that had been happy and prosperous in most of its aspects, had not resulted in any sympathetic union of souls. Mrs. Dumaresq was always ready to conform in all outward ways to the standard of conventional religious propriety; but it was not a subject upon which she cared to speak, and gradually her husband had come to be as reticent and silent as herself.

But since this illness had come upon him—this slow decay of strength that seemed to sap the very foundation of his being—Mr. Dumaresq had become more earnest in many of his thoughts and feelings than he had ever been before. He began to take new ideas of life, to look upon it from a fresh standpoint, and to glance in retrospect over his past life with a keen if calm regret.

And just at this time, he and his daughter

were thrown together in a manner that had never occurred before.

Reinée had always been very dear to her father. He looked upon her as a sort of living embodiment of light and life and gladness. Her sweetness, her loving caresses, her happy laugh and tender smiles made the happiness of his life. He had always determined that sadness and trouble should never come near her, that she should preserve her childish gladness and gaiety to the very end.

He had never for a moment imagined that serious thoughts and deep convictions had ever troubled her fair head. He saw the sweet serenity of her face, watched her graceful, light-hearted movements, saw that she was happy, and concluded, with strange inconsequence, that the root of her happiness lay in the fact that she had never required to think seriously of life, or to trace out its complex bearings.

But when he had been left alone with her, and they had drawn near to one another, as those will do who are conscious of a subtle link of sympathy and comprehension, then he found out his mistake—found out that his child was far beyond him upon the road to life everlasting, and that her sweet, unvarying happiness was due not to indifference and

carelessness, but to the full and unclouded assurance of a Saviour's love, a Father's care, and the hallowing guidance of the Spirit of truth.

They had not many visitors at the Hall just then. Juliet Granby was away, so was Gerald Meynal. Barbara was increasingly busy, and although a warm friendship and strong, mutual attraction existed between her and Reinée, they did not see very much of one another.

Wulfrie Meynal was, perhaps, their most regular visitor. Mr. Dumaresq wished him to come in from time to time, as he felt confidence in his medical skill and liked to see a doctor frequently, as many invalids do, even if he had not much to say upon an individual visit. Wulfrie had plainly told his patient that he could not benefit him by frequent attendance; but when the other had asked him, almost as a favor, not to be many days without a visit, the young man had not the heart to refuse.

As for Wulfrie himself, these visits to the Hall quickly became the bright spots in a rather sad and weary life. He did not analyse the cause of this; he was content to accept it without comment, and to take the good that fell to his share with quiet gratitude, as he

took the evil with manly resolution and resignation.

Between Reinée and Wulfrie a bond of sympathy and mutual comprehension had sprung up, as it were, very early in their acquaintance and only grew stronger with time. Single-hearted and simple and quietly in earnest, they recognised in each other qualities that drew them together, and now that circumstances were leading their paths to cross so often, they were learning to love one another without being in the least aware of it themselves.

Matters were much upon this footing at St. Hilda when Mrs. Dumaresq returned, her round of visits paid, to take up her abode once more at the Hall. It was December by this time, and the long, winter sleep had settled down over the face of nature. Clive, who found Scotland too cold for his taste, came home likewise, and Arthur Trevelyan was expected shortly on another visit.

It could not be avoided without "a row," Clive told his sister. Mrs. Dumaresq would invite him herself if he did not: he must come, but Reinée should not be bullied if he could help it.

Reinée had no intention whatever of engaging herself to Arthur Trevelyan to please her

mother. Greatly as she liked to do what was told her, and to give pleasure to all about her, and especially to her parents, she knew that there must be limits to submission and even to filial obedience. Her father, she now felt certain, would not urge her against her better feelings, but, if he fully understood the matter, might even take her part against the marriage, and Clive was certain to stand by her; yet Reinée shrank from the approaching contest with her mother, and wished that the visitor might elect to stay away.

Mrs. Dumaresq came back full of plans and projects for her daughter's aggrandisement. A return to the old life of social pleasures had awakened within her all her old ambitions, and had strengthened her former determination; other girls, far less attractive or well-dowered than Reinée, were marrying on all sides—some of them making brilliant matches—and people began to wonder how it was that Mrs. Dumaresq's charming daughter did not "go off." Mrs. Dumaresq felt a good deal of irritation at hearing such remarks, and blamed herself for having been so easy with Reinée, and for not taking a higher hand with regard to this tacit engagement. No girl with any sense of honor could possibly refuse a man who had been waiting for

her for years, and that upon the well-known understanding that she would marry him when of a suitable age. Had he not been detained by the fascinations of travel in foreign lands he would have carried off his wife as soon as she attained her majority, as had always been arranged; but he had not come back for more than a year after that time, and then there had been an odd reluctance on Reinée's part to give him the least encouragement.

But things could not possibly drift on in this way any longer. In all probability Arthur Trevelyan would succeed to the peerage to which he was heir before another twelve months had passed; and Mrs. Dumaresq was feverishly anxious that her daughter should share the elevation with him.

Reinée, however, was always gentle, loving, and dutiful, and her father could not be brought to see that she was anything but faultless. He indulged her in every possible way, and nothing made him happier than being asked favors or taken into her confidence.

She was very busy now with preparations for a Christmas festival for all the poor of the neighborhood; and Clive entered with zest into the project, and became its very

life and soul. He and Reinée were as happy as two children, planning, contriving and devising; and the result certainly repaid their labor and forethought.

There was a Christmas tree for the children, and a tea in the barn, and a more substantial repast for adults in the laundry, whilst doles were sent round to the sick or infirm, that they, too, might share in the general enjoyment.

Reinée and Clive were in their glory, and by the frank kindliness of their manner, and the unaffected interest they took in everything and everybody, won golden opinions from all.

Barbara and Wulfrie came in to watch proceedings for a time, as did also Celia and Frank Leslie; and Reinée was pleased that they had cared to do so, and watched with bright eyes and a happy smile whilst Wulfrie went about amongst the children, evoking shouts of laughter by his sallies and funny questions. There was no doubt as to his popularity amongst the poor of all ages and sections. Glances of gratitude followed him as he moved, and broken words of thanks—broken because he always stopped the speaker with some question or comment—were poured upon him, so to speak, from almost every

person present. Reinée felt a curious sort of warm personal pride and gladness, as she saw and heard all this.

Arthur Trevelyan was likewise present, for he had come to spend Christmas at the Hall, determined not to leave until he had won from Reinée the promise she had withheld so long. He did not mix in any way with the people, but stood aloof as a spectator merely, and with eyes only for the fair girl who attracted him more and more, the further she seemed to withdraw herself from him.

He was not unobservant, and he was not slow of comprehension, and he was intensely jealous, with the jealousy of a small and unworthy nature. What he saw or thought he saw that evening, gave him ample food for meditation, and meditation of no pleasant kind.

But he kept silence and bided his time. On twelfth night there was to be a ball at the great house—a dance in honor of Reinée's birthday, that occurred very early in the year and was generally marked as a fête day—and he resolved that upon that night he would speak to her and claim her as his own. She must surely have forgotten the episode that had made an unfavorable impression upon her six months ago, and she could hardly refuse

a man who had been waiting for her for so many years.

So, at least, Trevelyan argued, and was most careful of his conduct and language during the days that intervened. When she was his wife he would, perhaps, revenge himself for the constraint she made him put upon himself, but in the present it behoved him to act very discreetly and circumspectly.

Had Reinée trusted him or liked him a little better than she did, she might have been deceived by the outward show he made of sympathy and interest in her thoughts and pursuits. But she was too intensely sincere and truthful herself not to be very quick to detect the least taint of insincerity in others. Trevelyan's professions did not impress her as genuine. She knew enough of life to distrust the appearance of changes that came so suddenly and with so little effort. Convictions of a lifetime do not alter so readily as his seemed to have done. But, to tell the truth, she thought but little of him in any way, her mind was occupied by matters in which he had neither part nor lot.

Her ball, however, was a great success, and much appreciated in a neighborhood where such entertainments were rare. Mrs. Dumarquesq was gratified by the way in which every-

thing went off. Reinée looked lovely, and her manner and bearing were perfect. She was just a little too gracious towards Dr. Meynal to please her mother, but as the young doctor did not dance, but only came to look after Mr. Dumaresq a little, this was of small consequence.

The evening was over. Clive was busy seeing the last guests to their carriages. Mrs. Dumaresq had the little cosy inner drawing-room all to herself and was resting after her exertions, when Arthur Trevelyan suddenly appeared, his face as black as a heavy thunder-cloud.

Immediately the mother divined that something was amiss, and her face grew anxious as she asked—

“What is the matter? what has happened?”

“What has happened is that Reinée has given me my *congé* in most unequivocal terms. Is this the result of your boasted skill and influence?”

The young man flung himself into a chair and fiercely bit the ends of his moustache. His words were rude and his manner uncourteous; but Mrs. Dumaresq made allowances for him. Indeed, she was too much amazed herself to notice trifles.

“Reinée refused you!”

"Most emphatically. She would not hear a word—at least words were simply thrown away upon her. She was—she was——"

"Not insolent, surely—to you."

Trevelyan laughed mirthlessly.

"Insolent! Do you know Reinée so little as that? She was courtesy, dignity and sweetness itself. That girl was born to be a queen—her manner is perfection; she holds her own with the grace and self-possession of an empress—and with the same inexorable firmness. What has come to her? She was always lovely and bewitching; but there is that about her that makes her absolutely irresistible. Why cannot I win her? I can make her a countess in time? What more does she want? Will nothing but a kingdom satisfy her?"

Mrs. Dumaresq pressed her hands together in intense irritation and agitation.

"She cannot know her own mind. She must not be allowed to play with you. It is intolerable to be thwarted like this! What can have come over her? I cannot understand it. She has got beyond me, and I know no more how or why than you do."

"Oh, I have a very good idea how and why it has all come about," answered Trevelyan, with a fierce sneer. "She has got some fan-

atical religious notion into her head, and nothing is thought of but how to square the world to a miserable superstition. I warned you long ago, but you smiled at my fears. Perhaps, now that the mischief has been done past remedy, you will wish you had listened to me to better purpose when there was still time."

"But is it past remedy?" questioned Mrs. Dumaresq, with feverish vehemence. "I am not convinced of that yet. I must see what can be done."

Trevelyan sneered again.

"You will pardon me if I say I have not the same confidence in your powers of management that once I had. How was it you allowed Reinée to get so completely beyond you?"

Mrs. Dumaresq winced, yet she was fond of Arthur, and did not exactly resent the question. Tears of anger and mortification stood in her eyes. She felt that things were going cruelly against her.

"I cannot tell what has come over her," cried the mother, her usual firmness and self-possession deserting her at this crisis. "She has changed so imperceptibly that it has been impossible to note anything at which one could take reasonable exception, and yet

she has grown so strong, or self-willed, or something, that I do not know what to do with her. But I will talk to her, Arthur; I will see if I cannot bring her to reason."

"You may talk—I have talked, too—" answered Trevelyan, gloomily, "but you will talk in vain. She has an answer ready for everything. The long and the short of it is, I am not good enough for her; nobody is who does not share her new-fangled notions of religion and philanthropy. I did try what toleration and conformity would do; but that was not one tithe of what my lady demands. It is too absurd! too ridiculous! What have you all been about to let her get so eaten up with fanaticism?" and he started up and paced the floor in unconcealed irritation.

"I am sure it is no doing of mine," answered Mrs Dumaresq, roused to defend herself. "I have steadily discouraged anything of the kind from her nursery days. Active opposition is never any use in such cases, but all that I could do I have done."

"Which means in plain words that you have done nothing," answered Trevelyan, with a sneer. "Why did you not take her away earlier from a place where she was exposed to such influences?"

"Influences? I do not know of any. She has been nowhere and made no intimate friends."

"What about that apothecary doctor-chap and his sister? Are you blind, my dear madam?"

Mrs. Dumaresq looked at him with a sudden contraction of the brows.

"What do you mean, Arthur?"

"Mean? oh, nothing. It is all nothing to me now. My game is played out, and I am not going to risk being refused a second time; but take care that your sweet, docile daughter does not foist upon you a son-in-law you would little relish. Fanaticism is liable to take odd freaks. You had better look to it before it is too late," and with that Arthur Trevelyan flung himself from the room without another word.

In the hall Reinée and Clive were standing together, but he did not observe them as he passed. The last guest had departed, and the girl had come out and laid her hand upon her brother's arm.

"Clive," she said, "I want you to come with me to mamma. I have something to tell her. Will you come and help me?"

"To be sure. Is it about Trevelyan?"

"Yes."

"He has spoken?"

"Yes."

"And you?"

"I think you know that, Clive, I have refused him."

"You have done quite right, little sister. You could never love a man of his stamp."

"Never, never."

"No. He is very different from the man he was in old days. He is not worthy of you."

"Will you come with me to mamma? I must tell her; but I am sorry to have to grieve her. She always was so fond of Arthur."

"You cannot marry him on that account," said Clive, gravely. "Come, then, we will go and tell her at once."

CHAPTER XXI.

SURPRISES.

"I WONDER you are not ashamed to look me in the face after your wilful, headstrong, disobedient conduct," said Mrs. Dumaresq, as she raised her eyes and saw Reinée standing before her. "Do you want to break my heart by thwarting the most cherished plan of a lifetime?"

"Mother, dear," said Reinée, gently, "I cannot bear to distress you. It hurts me as much as it hurts you. I would do very much to please and gratify you, but I cannot marry Arthur even to do that. If you knew my feelings towards him, I do not think you would even wish it."

Mrs. Dumaresq lifted her head with a gesture indicative of displeasure.

"And pray what are your objections to him? I have known him intimately nearly all his life and I have no fault to find with him. What have you to allege against him?"

"I do not wish to say anything against him: but I do not love him. I do not even like

him. Surely that is reason enough against promising to be his wife."

"Pardon me, but it is not. You have been partially bound to him for years. He has been waiting for you during the best years of his youth. Something more than childish caprice is wanted to justify you in throwing him over at the last."

The color deepened in Reinée's face, but her glance did not waver nor her voice falter.

"That provisional engagement was no doing of mine," she answered, steadily, "and I cannot accept the responsibility as if it were. Nor is it caprice that makes me refuse him now. It is an absolute conviction that we are entirely unsuited to each other, and could never be happy in a united life. How could I vow to love and honor him, knowing that I could do neither?"

"And pray why could you do neither? Who are you to set yourself up as a judge of a man who has been a friend to your parents for many years?"

"I do not want to judge him, but I cannot blind my eyes."

"Really! And pray what do those eyes of yours see?"

"I see a great deal I would rather not," answered Reinée, regretfully. "Mother, dear,

do not turn away from me so sternly. Let me try to explain a little. I have tried to like Arthur and to believe in him—indeed I have; but I cannot. When Clive was nearly killed before his eyes he stood by without lifting a finger to help him, and had only sneers for the man who had risked his life in averting the accident. Who but a coward, a man without any sense of nobility or manliness could sink so low as that? It opened my eyes to his true nature as nothing else, perhaps, could have done so effectually. And then—and then——”

“Well, what then?”

Reinée looked wistfully at her mother as if doubtful how far to venture.

“Mamma,” she said, softly, “do you think he is—a good man?”

“What is your definition of a good man? A sort of religious fanatic, I suppose?”

“No,” answered the girl, quietly. “I think I mean a man who is perfectly upright and sincere, acting in all things according to his conscience, and always striving after a high and noble ideal. I think that a religious man is most likely to be all this, for I am sure that it is loving God and trying to follow his footsteps that helps us most. But it is not because Arthur is not religious exactly that I

cannot trust him. It is because he is not truthful, not sincere. He pretends to be what he is not when it suits his purpose, and he simulates thoughts and aspirations that in his heart he scorns and detests. Oh, yes, mother, he does—I know it well. That is what I cannot and will not stand. Many noble-hearted men whom we love and reverence have been troubled by doubts, have never been able to share our confidence in unseen things, but then they would scorn to pretend it was otherwise with them. Their doubts are honest and sincere like themselves, and we respect and honor them even if we disagree. Arthur is not honest, he is not truthful. He is a time-server and does not regard the truth. He is a coward, too. How could I ever be his wife? Mother, if you knew him as well as we do, I think you would not even wish it.”

“I think not,” said Clive, who had stood beside his sister all this time, but so far without speaking. “Trevelyan has been my friend, and I have no wish to bear witness against him now. But he is not worthy to be Reinée’s husband. I think I would sooner see her laid in her grave than married to him. He would break her heart and blight her life. I have suspected as much some time. I am sure of it now.”

Mrs. Dumaresq looked as if she had no power to say more. She had had such blind confidence in her own power, and in Reinée's eventual obedience to this great wish of hers, that when she realised herself to be powerless she was strangely crushed and unnerved.

Clive saw his advantage, and stepped forward and took his mother's hands in his.

"Now, mother, dear," he said, in the playful, caressing way, so characteristic of him, "you must not worry, yourself any more about this, nor make Reinée unhappy. You would not, believe me, have liked Trevelyan as a son-in-law, nor I him as a brother; and we are none of us in a hurry to get rid of our little queen, are we? Let Trevelyan go, and we will settle down and be happy and comfortable as we used to be before he came to trouble us. The father will be delighted to think that he is not going to lose Reinée, and so am I, and so, I think, are you. So we will forget our annoyances and take the good things of life as they come."

Now, Mrs. Dumaresq idolized Clive, and could seldom resist his pleading, moreover, as a wise woman she was not given to the error commonly designated as "crying over spilt milk," so that she was not altogether deaf to this appeal to her better nature.

"Well," she said, drawing a long breath like a sigh; "it is a dreadful disappointment to me, and I cannot help feeling it. However, there are other men in the world besides Arthur Trevelyan, and other good matches to be made. Reinée," she added, with some energy, looking full at her daughter, "if I consent to say no more about this, I shall expect a promise from you in return."

"What is that, mamma?"

"Promise me that you will never marry without my consent—mine as well as your father's."

The color rose in Reinée's face as she looked steadily at her mother.

"I promise," she answered, quietly. "I shall never take any step so important as that without your consent. Are you not my mother? I know you will always put my happiness and welfare first."

There was a sort of pleading sweetness in Reinée's eyes and voice that touched the mother's heart in Mrs. Dumaresq's rather cold breast. She kissed her daughter with unwonted gentleness.

"You are a good girl, Reinée, even if we do not always agree. Well, we will let the past go, and I will try to hope that all has turned out for the best."

So Arthur Trevelyan vanished from the house and from the lives of those with whom we are concerned. He went away deeply offended, and Clive hoped that there would be no need to keep up a friendship he little valued or desired.

Life went on very quietly in that quiet place. Reinée was happy and busy, and Clive amused himself by desultory shooting and hunting, and in assisting his sister in her many duties and pleasures.

One fine, mild evening early in the spring Mrs. Granby was sitting in the bow window of her cosy parlor, resting alike her hand and eyes during that space of time generally described as "between lights."

It was growing a little late for visitors and, therefore, she was rather surprised to see the Meynals' carriage draw up at her gate; but she was more than ever surprised to see Wulfrie Meynal descend and assist out a girl who appeared to be somewhat feeble and shaky.

Mrs. Granby's eyes were clear and undimmed. In a moment she had recognised her granddaughter Juliet, and she went out into the porch, full of wonder, and in some little anxiety of mind.

Next moment a pair of warm arms were

clasped about her neck, and Juliet was sobbing in a silent, convulsive way on her grandmother's shoulder.

Mrs. Granby gently led the agitated girl into the parlor, laid her tenderly upon the couch, and still standing beside her and caressing her tumbled hair, from which she had removed the hat, she looked up at Wulfrie Meynal for an explanation.

"That is right, Mrs. Granby," he said, "let her keep quiet. She will be all right again very soon."

"What is the matter?" asked Mrs. Granby.

"Nothing very much. She has got a bad throat—a 'hospital throat' as we call it, but rest and fresh air will be all the medicine she wants. She has had rather a rough time of it at Aylcester—I was afraid it might be so. Some day she shall go on a visit to the lady superintendent of my hospital in London—one of the most delightful women I know—and see the more favorable aspect of hospital life."

"Why was I not told that my child was ill?" asked the old lady, bristling up, metaphorically speaking, at the thought that Juliet had been neglected.

"Because your granddaughter, like a silly little Spartan, said nothing about her increasing feeling of illness, and in the busy life there

if people are quiet they are likely to be overlooked. It was my lecturing day there to-day, and I went to see how Juliet was getting on as I generally do, found her just ready to drop, and her throat as raw as a piece of meat out of a butcher's shop. So I just took law into my own hands and brought her straight off home. My own impression is that home will be the place for her for some while to come."

"I am very much obliged to you, Wulfrie," said Mrs. Granby. "If you have time will you look in to-morrow to see the throat?"

"Certainly," answered Wulfrie, as he shook hands, "but I leave her in excellent keeping. I have no uneasiness about her now. Good-bye, Juliet, keep up your heart; you will soon feel ever so much stronger and better."

Juliet's answer was an inarticulate murmur, and as soon as he had gone the sobs burst out once more in that painfully convulsive way.

"Grandmother, oh, grandmother!" she said, and once more she flung her arms about Mrs. Granby's neck and wept upon her shoulder.

Gently and tenderly the old lady soothed the agitated girl. She bathed her hot head and feverish hands, and insisted on her keeping perfectly quiet without attempting to talk.

Juliet, worn out and exhausted, was glad enough to obey these injunctions; only from

time to time she would glance up wistfully to say, "How good you are to me, grandmother!"

Later on, when the girl was lying in her own spotless bed, with a fire burning cosily in the polished grate, and all the dainty prettiness of her own room surrounding her—and how pretty and dainty it did look after the bareness of the little narrow cell she had left behind!—the tears started once more to her eyes.

"Grandmother, dear," she said, softly.

Mrs. Granby came and leaned over the bed. Juliet's glance was touching in its shy humility.

"Grandmother, dear, can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you for what, my dear?"

"I think you know, grandmother—for going away as I did."

"But you had my permission to enter the hospital, my dear; it was done with my full consent."

"Yes, I know, grandmother; you have always been so kind. I can see it now, you had given me everything you could to make me contented and happy. But you must know how much I need forgiveness, not, perhaps, for the going away, but for the way in which it was done, for my wicked discontent and ingratitude."

Mrs. Granby took both the girl's hot hands in hers. Her face was grave, yet very gentle and loving.

"My dear," she answered, kindly and quietly, "I do know what you mean, and I forgive it all fully and freely. If you have learned a lesson of contentment by your experiences, you will not have bought it too dearly."

"Grandmother," said Juliet, looking up through blinding tears, "I have learned to love God since I have been so unhappy and so much alone. Some day I should like to tell you all about it, but it is that that has made all the difference, I know."

There was a sparkle, too, in Mrs. Granby's eyes as she bent to kiss her granddaughter.

"God bless you, my child," she said, softly and tenderly. "I think we shall understand one another now."

"You always understood me," answered Juliet, with a little tremulous smile. "It was I who could not or would not understand."

"Ah! my dear, you are young, you know. There is a great deal that only time and experience can teach us."

And then Mrs. Granby laid her hand softly upon the girl's lips, and bid her try to sleep, and not talk, or even think any more that night.

For two or three days Juliet continued weak and feverish, and spent a good many hours of each day in her bed, but, nevertheless, the days were very happy ones.

It was such luxury to lie there in that quiet, pretty room, to feel that there was no rush of work going on below, no need for her to worry herself over neglected duties, for which she was not fit, or dread a return to the interrupted work of the ward.

She could lie still in this quiet place, and be glad and grateful for its dreamy repose. She recalled almost wonderingly her old irritation and distaste, her restless longing for change, and her absolute conviction that she could be happier anywhere else. A thrill of shame ran through her sometimes as she recalled the past, reviewed all the unfailing kindness she had received from her grandmother, and the ingratitude with which it had been received. Once she quite disliked to have to sit with the old lady or talk to her; now her happiest hours were those spent in her company.

When she once made up her mind to confide fully in Mrs. Granby, the very painfulness of telling all put many things before her in a clearer light than she had ever been able to see them before; and her grandmother

was so kind, so gentle, so full of sympathy and comprehension, that the girl's love and gratitude sprang up towards her as it had never done of old, and the hearts that had long been sundered drew very close together now.

St. Hilda was rather disposed to make a heroine of the girl, who had returned from her hospital duties knocked up, as it was reported, by the zeal and ardor she had displayed at her post.

She was not, however, puffed up at all by all this notice; and although it was only to Barbara and Reinée that she told the whole story of her folly and obstinacy, she never forgot the humiliation she had been through, and knew better than to believe that to get her own way was to reach the summit of human happiness.

Mrs. Granby was very kind and judicious with the girl. She did not urge her to lay aside all her old ideals, or to make up her mind never to leave the beaten track of an uneventful country life. On the contrary, she told her plainly that if she felt any real call of duty elsewhere, or even a very strong desire for change, she would do her best to gratify her, and with far more confidence now than she could have done in old days when

the girl had so very very much to learn and so little disposition to learn it.

Wulfrie after a while renewed his offer of introducing her to the lady superintendent of his old hospital, and getting her on a visit there where she could see everything and be in the wards as much or as little as she chose, without the necessity for so much menial work, and with the addition of the companionship of other girls—lady probationers of her own social standing.

This idea, coupled with the prospect of seeing something of London, pleased Juliet, whose interest in hospital life had not been quenched by hard experience, and who was still eager to fit herself as a nurse in case of any outbreak of war. Mrs. Granby quite approved the plan, and would not hear of Juliet's giving it up on her account. The months of her absence would pass very quickly, and she should be a great gainer when the girl came home full of interesting information.

So Juliet at last looked forward to seeing London and learning more of nursing at one and the same time, and very pleased she was with the prospect. The project, however, was delayed for the present by a new turn in the aspect of affairs.

It was upon a warm day in April that

Juliet first heard the news that resulted in her detention at St. Hilda.

She was sitting in the garden with a book, when she was aware that Barbara Meynal was hurrying towards her.

"Ah, Juliet," she said, "I am glad you are at home. I wanted to consult you, because I think you will know most and be most useful if you are not afraid of infection. Diphtheria in a very bad form has broken out in the hamlet. Three children died to-day and more are sickening; and it has attacked some of the grown-up people, too. Wulf thinks it is caused by the drains, and that there will be a regular epidemic."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DOWNWARD PATH.

AND how was it meantime with the gay and brilliant Gerald? Where was the missing one all this time? How was it he had broken off all communication with his old home? What was he doing with himself, and what giddy scenes of pleasure were alluring him from his old associations, and alienating him from all family ties?

Let us leave, for a brief space of time, the peaceful surroundings of St. Hilda and the doings of those with whom we are mainly concerned, and enter the great tumultuous city, into whose mighty vortex hundreds of lives are drawn each year only to be hopelessly crushed and wrecked.

Gerald Meynal, untrained, undisciplined, gay, heedless and headstrong, had flung himself blindly into this mighty stream, having neither experience nor moral stamina, neither rudder nor compass of any kind to guide him, filled with blind self-confidence and youthful pride. And now at the end of many months, let us see where the stream of pleas-

ure had landed him, that stream along which he hoped to float in a halcyon existence whose joys should be always fresh and new.

In a dismal London attic, in one of those peculiarly sordid, miserable places designated as "lodging houses for single gentlemen," sat Gerald Meynal in front of a canvas some two feet square, upon which he was busily engaged in painting fruit and flowers in peculiarly gorgeous and vivid colors.

It would require a keen glance to recognise in this pinched and haggard young man the once brilliant and handsome Gerald, who had been the pride of his mother's heart and the spoilt darling of his native place. His face was thin and hollow, his eyes were large and bright, yet wearing that uncertain look so characteristic of a man who habitually drinks spirit. Moreover, the eyes were red-rimmed and bloodshot, the thin, white hands were tremulous, and hardly equal even to the coarse kind of painting upon which they were engaged with feverish activity and energy. His figure was thin and shrunk as if from want of proper nourishment as well as from chronic ill-health. Altogether, he presented a pitiable appearance, and it would almost have broken his mother's heart to see him as he sat there in that cold and cheerless place.

How was it that he had fallen so low as this? How was it that he had sunk so rapidly from the ease and luxury to which he had always accustomed himself, to this melancholy condition of indigence and poverty? And how was it that when he was in a state of such need he did not write for assistance to those who, he must have known, would be so ready and willing to tender it?

To answer these questions it will be necessary to cast a brief backward glance over Gerald's career during the eight or nine months of his "emancipation and independence."

It is not a pleasant task to follow in the steps of one who is carelessly yet deliberately treading the downward path towards physical and moral ruin; and yet it is impossible to avoid doing so sometimes in order to make clear what is to come.

Gerald had plunged with all the eagerness of a pleasure-loving nature into the life of dissipation and excitement to which his friend Hector Thompson had introduced him. He spent his days upon the race-course, and his evenings in every sort of amusement that gamblers delight in.

He won and lost money with equal *insouciance*; and ran into debt with the recklessness so characteristic of those whose lives are spent

in the excitement of speculation. His rooms were not paid for after the first few weeks with any regularity. He ordered in furniture and forgot the bills, bought everything he fancied, whether he had money or not; made payments at intervals to his creditors when he had made a "lucky stroke," and on the strength of it plunged deeper and deeper into debt.

On the whole, during the first few months of his life in London he was unusually fortunate, and his handsome face and pleasing manners made him a favorite with his companions. He and Hector Thompson soon became estranged. The latter was a hard-headed, cautious man—cautious even in his illicit pleasures, he never lost sight of the main chance, and always contrived to get out of any situation before it had entailed upon him any trouble or loss. He had been pleasant and genial to Gerald at first, but he took less and less notice of him as time went by, and often talked to and of him in a patronising or slighting way of which that young man did not at all approve. Moreover, Gerald, though reckless and unscrupulous enough, had still a code of honor of his own, and that code of honor was perpetually being broken by Hector, who seemed to have no scruples at all, save those of self-interest.

So the two friends rapidly cooled towards one another, sharp words passed between them, and when Gerald's good fortune seemed on the wane, Hector turned his back upon him altogether, and lost sight of him as completely as his family had done.

It was about Christmas-time that the tide of good fortune seemed to set steadily against Gerald. He did not attribute this to anything save a passing cloud, and played on against odds, feeling certain that the luck would turn again soon. But the luck did not turn, and he became every day more and more heavily involved. He had been an excellent billiard player at first, his eye was true, his hand steady and his nerve excellent, because he felt no undue anxiety as to the result of the matches in which he played. His most regular winnings had been at the billiard table, and he had always calculated on maintaining himself comfortably by his play. But Gerald did not take into consideration that he could not indulge his appetite for strong drink and for the perpetual excitements of fast living, and yet keep his steadiness of hand and eye and nerve. His opponents took advantage of his weakness to urge him to drink and to "enjoy life." Little by little his skill forsook him, and yet he did not understand the cause aright.

When the new year came in, his bills came pouring in by every post. He was appalled at the magnitude of his liabilities. He had no means of meeting them, and in his frantic endeavors to win back some of the money he had lost, and to drown the remorse and sense of desperation that was dominating him, he plunged deeper and deeper into the slough in which he was involved, and every step sank him to a lower level of bodily and mental abasement.

The inevitable crash came at length, when Gerald had to fly from his creditors, leaving his comfortable lodgings by stealth, with only a couple of pounds in his pocket, and the clothes which he stood up in. It was the only way, as he told himself. He must cut adrift from everything and everybody connected with his disastrous past. He would try to make a fresh start elsewhere, and when he had retrieved his fallen fortunes, he would pay off his creditors and show his face to the world once more. The young man had lost almost everything, but he retained his sanguine self-confidence yet. And why at this juncture did he not return to St. Hilda to recommence life; knowing, as he could not fail to do, how gladly he would be received by his mother—possibly by all his family? Why was it

that in the time of his sorest need he cut himself completely adrift from his own people, and became at once an alien and outcast?

The motive for this course of action was strangely mixed. To do Gerald justice, it is only fair to say that one very strong feeling was shame and remorse. He felt he had disgraced himself so entirely that he resolved he would never entail upon his family the distress and misery of knowing all his folly and wickedness. His pride, too, revolted against confessing the fiasco he had made of the life that was to have been so successful and enjoyable; and he could not bear the thought of having his affairs looked into by Wulfrie and his debts paid off by the elder brother, as he knew would be done, if he were to return home at this crisis.

No, he would not face his family and St. Hilda in his present pitiful plight. Shame, pride, and a sort of mistaken sense of good feeling and lingering affection all combined to bring him to this conclusion. He would even give up receiving remittances from Wulfrie sooner than have his failure and disgrace canvassed all over the place where he was known and where his family still lived.

If Gerald would ever have survived the bitter winter may well be doubted, had it

not been for the interest of a chance stranger, who introduced him to a picture dealer, from whom he obtained employment in the manufacture of those glaring and incongruous pictures that sometimes adorn the walls of well-to-do, small tradesmen and people of their class.

By this work he was enabled to rent a small attic, and by means of unremitting labor to keep himself from actual starvation. But he suffered almost more during this period of his life than he had done in the preceding months; for then there had been that element of uncertainty—the belief that something would turn up for his advantage—that makes so strong an element in the gambler's life, and gives a certain zest even to the most miserable existence. Then he had occasionally won money at cards or billiards in some of those places that he still frequented whenever a stroke of good fortune gave him the opportunity. He had known moments when he had deluded himself with the hope that fortune was about to smile upon him once more; and with the strange infatuation that often possesses an ill-balanced mind, he had told himself, and sometimes believed, that the uncertainty and excitement even of this precarious existence was prefera-

ble to the dull monotony he had known at St. Hilda.

But when he was driven to constant mechanical drudgery as the only means of staving off starvation, and the sense of relief he had experienced at first in the finding of regular employment had worn off, then came a sort of despairing misery and hopelessness that not even recourse to the brandy bottle could drown.

Again and again he resolved when he took home a batch of work, never to apply for another, and again and again did absolute hunger, and that yet more terrible thirst, drive him to take up palette and brushes once more, and set to work with feverish energy. The misery and degradation of such a position ate into his very soul, and yet—yet still the old feelings of pride and shame withheld him from communicating with his friends; and it seemed to him now, that whatever happened he could never bear they should know the truth about him. St. Hilda must never, never hear how he, Gerald Meynal (though he called himself George Mays now), had worked ten hours a day in a dismal attic, painting glaring daubs for a picture manufacturer! He should never survive the disgrace of feeling if such a thing were

known! He would rather die of want and privation in his cold attic, as it seemed likely enough he would do!

Poor, unhappy Gerald! he was, indeed, reaping a bitter harvest from the seed he had sown. He had reached that apathetic stage of misery when it was easier for him to go on toiling and starving, than to make the effort that would have put an end to this poverty and brought his friends to his side.

Yet as he sat hour after hour with numb fingers and aching brow, doing the work that revolted him, he had leisure for thought and reflection such as he had never known before, and the memories of the past rising up before him would often bring the tears to his eyes, and show with a startling clearness the side of affairs that he had steadily ignored in old days. He saw his old idleness, self-indulgence, and conceit as others had seen it, only in far stronger colors. He saw the wasted opportunities, the slighted kindness, the good things he had scorned and refused to touch, as, perhaps, he never would otherwise have seen them; and he would often bow his head upon his hands and weep like a child over the past that never could return.

And then would come surging over him an

intense longing to retrieve the past, to return—as the prodigal son returned—to the home he had despised and the parent he had slighted, and in ever so humble a fashion atone for the sins and follies he had committed. But mingled with this longing was the old sense of pride and shame, together with a haunting fear that he would never, never be anything but a source of misery and disgrace to them; and that if he went back repentant in his misery, the old craving for excitement would conquer him again so soon as fortune smiled once more upon him, and that he would plunge again into wild courses which would entail upon his kindred worse misery than ever.

Gerald had no faith in himself because he had had no faith in God, and, therefore, no sheet anchor on which he could rely to hold him back from drifting to destruction. And yet this very realizing of his weakness was an advance upon the buoyant self-confidence with which he had started in life; it was the beginning of that repentance without which no sinner can turn from his sin or be reconciled with God. The poor, unhappy Gerald was nearer grasping the forgiving love extended to him by his Saviour in the hour of his deepest dejection, than he had been

since he had knelt at his mother's knee and lisped his baby prayers with the earnestness of a little child.

It was in this mood, torn by conflicting doubts and fears, and tossed on a troubled sea, with no love human or divine to uphold and comfort him, that the early summer tide found Gerald Meynal. The winter and spring had been peculiarly cold and ungenial, and summer, when it came, came all at once with a sudden burst of heat that was neither healthy nor agreeable, at any rate, to the dwellers in crowded cities.

Gerald's health had been undermined by a long course of dissipation and privation, and both the wildness of the former days and the sedentary habits of the latter had told heavily upon him. His appetite had forsaken him—even that craving for drink had left him somewhat of late; his fingers grew so weak and nerveless that he could hardly hold his brush, and, despite the increasing weariness that bore him down like a leaden weight, he could get no quiet sleep either by night or day, but only such as was attended by feverish, disquieting dreams, and left him more exhausted than it found him.

Gradually he seemed to lose all consciousness of his present life and surroundings. He used

to fancy himself back at St. Hilda, playing in the fields with his sisters; or painting the immortal works of which he had once been so fond of talking in that luxurious studio where so much time had been idled away. He still sat with his canvas before him and painted away at the gorgeous blossoms; but when he staggered down the stairs and mechanically found his way to the shop where his work was received, the master looked sharply from the picture to his face and back again, and remarked that if he could not keep sober during working hours he need not expect further orders.

He only received half pay that day, and no more canvases were given him to decorate; but he was in no condition to be troubled by either of these facts. He stumbled blindly back to his room, threw himself down upon the bed, and fell into a heavy stupor which seemed to him to last for days and nights.

He was aroused by hearing voices about him, and by feeling himself shaken, but in a quiet and kindly fashion as if merely to arouse his attention. He opened his heavy eyes with difficulty and saw as through a mist that one or two people were in the room with him. He fancied that in one he recognized his landlady, and some instinct told him that the

young-looking man bending over him was a doctor; but all the rest was hazy and confused, and, although he could hear that questions were addressed to him by the medical man, and could vaguely understand their import, yet his tongue was so heavy and his throat so dry that he could frame no reply, and could only lie back with half-closed eyes vaguely taking in what was spoken by those about him.

"No other case of illness in the house?"

"No, indeed, sir," this from the landlady in a shrill, aggrieved voice. "It's always been a healthy house, and I call it most uncalled for for attic lodger who pays least to go and get took by a fever, and give the house a bad name for the season."

"Pooh—pooh, my good woman, don't worry yourself; typhoid fever is not catching, and if your drains are all right, which the sanitary inspector has come to ascertain, there is no reason why another soul in the house should take it or even be alarmed by it. He may have taken the infection anywhere. It doesn't follow its anything wrong with the house. He looks half starved; but I suppose that is no concern of yours."

"He's always in work when he choses to do it. He can paint beautiful pictures."

"Well, well, the thing is now to get him down-stairs to the hospital fly as quickly and quietly as may be. Have you a husband or a son who can lend a hand?"

And then Gerald was conscious of being lifted and carried with some difficulty down the steep, ill-lighted staircase of that sordid house. He was so giddy and exhausted by the time he was put into the vehicle in waiting, that he lapsed into a species of unconsciousness from which he only awoke to find himself in the unwonted luxury and cleanliness of the ward of a large hospital. He was faintly aware of a sense of unspeakable relief at feeling himself thus cared for and thought for. He was dimly alive to the fact that he was considered in a very critical state; and he closed his eyes and hoped he should die quietly there, uncared for and unknown, and never awake again to the hard battle of life from which it seemed as if he had escaped at last.

And there, for the present, we must leave him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE EPIDEMIC.

THERE was no lack of employment at St. Hilda now for all who were willing and able to work.

The outbreak of diphtheria was no mere panic. Wulfrie Meynal had not overstepped the mark when he had spoken of it as an epidemic. The deadly disease had broken out in a bad form in the ill-drained, over-crowded fishing hamlet beneath the cliff, and threatened to spread into the town itself. The children were attacked most frequently, sickening one after the other with an alarming rapidity, and dying sometimes almost before help could be obtained.

If help was to be afforded to the sufferers it must be given promptly and courageously.

And, as is generally the case at such times, brave and devoted assistance was not lacking. Many volunteers came forward to give their help, and amongst these were Barbara Meynal and Juliet Granby, both well qualified by previous experience to do excellent service.

Wulfrie Meynal gave to all his assistants clear and concise directions how to avoid the infection, directed them never to take the patients' breath, never to go to work fasting or exhausted, and laid down a few of the like simple rules, by which, if attended to, all real danger might be avoided. Some risk each one ran, and did not shrink from it; but the doctor told them that by care and watchfulness they would in all probability escape taking the complaint, as nurses and doctors generally did. Also, as the infection could not be transmitted through a third person, no isolation from their families was necessary.

Gladly indeed would Reinée Dumaresq have joined this band of workers, but her mother would not hear of such a thing, and was with difficulty brought to consent to remain at the Hall at all. Mr. Dumaresq, however, declared against a move at such a time, and encouraged his daughter to do all in her power to relieve the sufferers from the epidemic, without exactly going amongst them and ministering to them personally.

So Reinée—*carte blanche* being thus extended to her—took counsel with Mrs. Granby and Barbara Meynal, and established a sort of kitchen-dispensary that proved all but invaluable during the weeks that followed. The

laundry was the centre of operations, for it was conveniently situated in the rear of the house buildings, and had an entrance of its own opening directly into the lane which led to the hamlet, as well as the ordinary communication with the house.

In this great building Reinée was queen and reigned supreme. Here the poor people came for the strong beef-tea or port wine that kept alive the flickering flame of life in many a little sufferer, who must inevitably have sunk without prompt assistance of such a kind. Here disinfectants were given to all who asked, and firing, and even blankets, to such as came armed with an "order" from Dr. Meynal or one of his band of assistants.

For convalescents, stronger nourishment was provided in cases where actual poverty made it necessary; and there was so much distress and misery in the place at this time, that, but for assistance, that might under other circumstances have been condemned as indiscriminate, the people must have died by the score.

The epidemic spread quickly to the town, and the well-to-do families soon had their hands full. So the care of the hamlet fell very much into the hands of the few residents there; and Mr. Dumaresq came forward with

noble liberality as far as money was concerned, whilst Reinée, under Mrs. Granby's superintendence, took charge of the practical part of work.

The servants of the household, who loved their sweet young mistress with all their hearts, entered heart and soul into her plans, first to please her, and later on out of a real sympathy with the sufferers and a wish to help them. The house-keeper never grumbled at the raid made upon her stores, or at the extra work involved in the keeping up of the dispensary; whilst the cook of her own accord told off a kitchen-maid for the making of beef-tea and soup, and the under-housemaid rose, unasked, an hour earlier each day, to get the laundry swept out and put to rights before her ordinary work began.

"Ah, but I should like to share your work," Reinée said to Barbara and Juliet one day, as they came up on their return from their daily round at the hamlet for the tea Reinée always had waiting for them. "Any one could order stores and give them out. I want to work as you do; only I am not allowed."

"I am very glad you are not," answered Juliet, with a smile many degrees more bright than was wont to be seen. "We could not do without her up here, could we, Barbara?"

"No, indeed! Reinée, you need not mind not visiting the people. We have a good staff of nurses and visitors; but none to take your place."

Reinée smiled sweetly, yet with a touch of sadness.

"It seems as if I were destined always to play the part of 'Lady Bountiful,' as you once called it when we were talking together of ideals, Juliet. And after all, it is my father's bounty, not mine."

"But yours is the management; the quickness and invaluable promptness and despatch with which everything is done," cried Barbara. "I wish you could hear Wulf speak of you and your laundry. He says you have saved more lives than he has already—not just because you have the things to give away, but because there is no blundering; because the right thing comes at the right moment, and nothing is ever omitted or forgotten."

The color rose slowly in Reinée's face, and a smile shone out of her eyes.

"I am very glad," she answered, simply. "I will not be discontented any more. Perhaps it is better for us to take the work that offers, than to try and choose our own."

"I think that now," answered Juliet, her face flushing somewhat, "although I always feel that it is not for me to talk."

Reinée smiled, and then turning to Barbara, asked, "Have all the Stones kept well? I see the man so seldom, now that he works on the lower farm. I hope my little Jack keeps out of harm's way."

"His mother has sent him to an aunt some twenty miles away. She was afraid he would be always getting down amongst the other children, and I think she was wise. She and Alice are in the cottage. I hope it will escape; it is isolated from the village pretty well."

"Yes; I would go to see Alice, only, perhaps, mamma might not even like me to go that little way towards the beach; besides, Alice never will speak to me; it is Clive who has won her heart. She has always a smile and a flower for him. I wish I could get her to make friends."

"She is odd—not quite right in the head, I fancy," answered Barbara; "she will not look at me, though she does not mind Wulf much; but she has never made friends with any one but your brother."

"I call it Clive's conquest," answered Reinée, with a little smile. "He is kind to the poor little girl, and often stops to sing her a song as he goes by. It is wonderful how her face lights up when she hears music. It seems a

sort of passion with her. Poor child, she will be rather dull without Jack, for she is fond of him. I must tell Clive to take her on his mind a little."

Clive Dumaresq had been away from home during the first outbreak of the epidemic, but he had lately returned, and had entered with great zeal into his sister's labors, and by his unfailing flow of bright spirits had at the same time lightened her toil and cheered her up in every way.

Mrs. Dumaresq would have liked to circumscribe Clive's wanderings as she had done Reinée's, and confine him closely to the park and its immediate surroundings; but sons are less amenable than daughters on such points, and the young man laughed playfully at her fears, and went much as usual. He sometimes, indeed, visited a sick man, to carry him one of Reinée's doles, or asked after any one whom he knew to be dangerously ill, and ascertained that the family had all they wanted; but he took care not to expose himself needlessly, and had no intention of running risks for no good reason.

Clive was fond of boating, and was often up and down the cliff path on his way to or from the beach. It was in this way that he had so completely won the heart of the little

cripple-girl, for he seldom passed by without pausing to say a few words, and his appearance was hailed as the main event in a somewhat sad and colorless life.

One sultry afternoon in May, when a sort of haze seemed to hang over sea and land, and to suggest ideas of sickness and infection, Clive was slowly ascending the cliff path from the beach.

He had been out in his boat, but the heat had driven him home. The day was peculiarly oppressive, and he felt tired and disinclined for exertion. As he reached the little cottage where the Stones lived, he thought he would rest for a few minutes in the shade, and sat down accordingly on the low stone wall where he had often paused before.

He had not been seated there long before he became aware of a low, continuous moaning proceeding from the cottage. He glanced round, but nobody was to be seen, and only these distressful moans broke the silence of the hot, summer-like afternoon. Somebody must be ill, or in trouble or pain, and, as it seemed, alone, too. Clive was too kind-hearted to go away without trying to do what he could to mend matters, so he swung himself over the low wall, and knocked at the cottage door, which stood wide open.

No answer was returned, but the moaning continued as before, and was more distinctly heard. It proceeded from the inner room, and after a moment's hesitation he entered the cottage and saw the sufferer.

Upon the low truckle bed in that close, airless little room lay the crippled Alice—dying. Yes, even an inexperienced eye could see at a glance that the child was dying fast. Her lips were black and parched, her eyes were dim and glazed, her breath came in painful gasps, and the efforts to swallow brought on paroxysms of pain.

Clive could well understand what had happened. The girl had fallen a victim to the fatal malady, perhaps, a day or two ago, and had been taken suddenly worse to-day. The mother had run for assistance of some kind, and meantime the poor child, growing rapidly worse, was likely to die quite alone.

A great wave of pity swept over Clive. He was not in the least disposed to run needless risk, and yet it seemed to him an absolute impossibility to go away coolly and leave a sick child to die unwatched and untended. The mother would not be long gone; at least, he would stay till she came back.

At that moment the girl looked up, and murmured a hoarse petition for water.

Clive moistened the parched lips, and propped up the gasping child in an easier position. He would have opened the window if he could, for the air was very foul and turned him rather sick, but he could not manage it. The bed was in the way, and the patient too ill to be disturbed.

As he moved about Alice looked hard at him with her dim, failing eyes, and suddenly a smile like a shadowy sunbeam flickered over her face.

"It's him!" she gasped, hoarsely yet joyfully, "him—as I thought—I'd never see no more—I begged and prayed as I might say good-bye. God does hear us—after all—I do believe!"

Clive was much touched, more by the look upon the dying face than by the blunt words barely articulated. He took the girl's hand in his kindly.

"I am here, Alice," he said; "can I do anything for you?"

She looked up with more of consciousness than before.

"I'm a-dying, ain't I?"

One moment's pause, and the simple, truthful answer, "I think so."

"I'm glad on it, too. I'd like to die, if God really cares for us, as Jack says. I think, per-

haps, he do, as he's sent you. Will you stay with me—till I die?"

All this was spoken with great difficulty; it seemed almost as if every breath drawn with such pain must be the last. Clive could only stand by helpless and watch the terrible struggle.

"I will not leave you, Alice," he said.

She understood and looked her gratitude, but strength and life were ebbing fast away. With a great effort she got out two more words:

"Music—sing!"

Her eyes sought his face imploringly. It seemed as if she wanted the help of some sweet sound to smooth the rough path she was treading. Strange as was the request at such a time and in such a place, Clive did not hesitate, and his clear, sweet voice sounded forth in the notes of that great and beautiful song, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

He sang it with a strange new sense of its wonderful truth and power, and the dying girl listened with her soul in her eyes.

"It is—like—angels," she whispered, with a little smile, and then, gazing into his face, she tried again and again to say some words that her parched lips refused to utter. It was a message to Reinée poor Alice wished to

send—a message asking for pardon for the ingratitude with which her many acts of kindness had been met. But though Clive bent down very close over the dying girl, he could barely catch the drift of what she wished to say; yet his smile and gentle words penetrated the cloud that dimmed her sight and hearing, and it was with a smile upon her lips that the child laid down the burden of a life that had known but little of joy in this world. He—her idol—had been with her in the hour of death, and his presence had made very bright for her the dark, rough passage. To her clouded mind it was the foreshadowing of the eternal love that would meet her upon the farther shore.

Clive Dumaresq, although saddened and shocked by having for the first time in his life witnessed death, did not feel any personal alarm at having encountered the infection, nor did Reinée, to whom he told the tale, express any particular fears. She saw so many every day who were constantly with the sick, that she had begun to lose the first sense of fear lest they should take the infection.

But two days later, just when her labors for the poor of the hamlet were being lightened, a terrible trouble at home fell upon the girl.

At the dinner table that day Clive sat looking white and strange. He could not eat, and presently excused himself on the plea of headache and left the room somewhat abruptly. Reinée felt a curious thrill of cold dismay run through her. She seemed to know from the first what was about to befall them; she followed him the moment she could do so without disturbing her father by showing undue anxiety, and found him already in bed, his white face oddly flushed despite its pallor, and his whole frame shivering convulsively.

"Don't come near me, Reinée," he said, with chattering teeth. "I am afraid I've got it."

"We will send for Dr. Meynal," answered Reinée, quietly, "it may be only a chill."

Brother and sister looked at each other for a moment, and sudden tears started to Reinée's eyes. Each read the thought of the other—each knew that Clive had caught the malady from the cripple girl, who had had it in its worst form. In her case it had proved fatal in three days time. What would it do in his?

Mrs. Dumaresq came in at this moment and saw at a glance that her son was ill. A spasm of pain crossed her face, for Clive was the idol of her heart—not otherwise very

susceptible to love—and a cold wave of fear swept over her, too.

“Has he been near any infection?” she asked softly of Reinée.

Clive heard the question and answered it for himself.

“Yes, mother. I saw a child die three days ago. There was nobody else there. I could not let her die alone.”

Mrs. Dumaresq made no reply. A settled gravity was in her look as she went away to despatch a summons for the doctor. Clive looked after her with rather wistful eyes.

“Poor mother,” he said, softly.

Reinée choked back an inclination to sob, and approached the bed with gentle steps. He put out his hand as if to keep her away; but she smiled and sat down beside him, taking the hot hand in hers.

“I know all about it,” she said, quietly. “I will not do anything rash; but you must not send me away, Clive.”—She stopped suddenly, and he added the words she had not dared even to think.

“We may not have so very much longer to be together.”

There had been so much of death all round them lately, that it was not strange for such thoughts to occur to them, even in the first

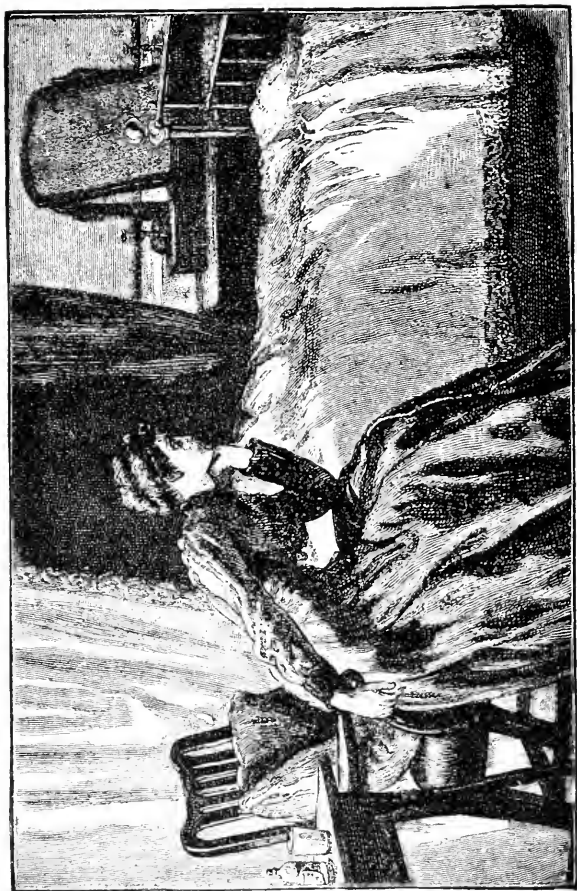
moments, before they had had any medical opinion. Clive, with all his vigor and brightness, had never been robust. He had seldom ailed anything serious; but there had always been an undefined feeling in the minds of his family that a severe illness would go rather hard with him.

Reinée sat beside him holding his hand, and trying by prayer to school herself to calmness and resignation. Clive lay in the passive state engendered by the lassitude of fever. He had struggled hard all day against an overmastering oppression of illness, and it was almost a relief to give way at last. But for the rapidly increasing pain in his throat he could have been absolutely comfortable.

Wulfrie Meynal came quickly. Mrs. Dumaresq accompanied him to the room. His experienced eye took in his patient's condition in an instant. It hardly required a glance at the throat before the diagnosis was complete.

"I know I've got it," said Clive, hoarsely. "Don't let Reinée catch it; but don't banish her altogether if you can help it."

"We will try to compromise matters," answered Wulfrie, in his steady tones, with one of his most kindly and reassuring glances at the girl. Reinée met his eye with a quiet,



Reinée Waited in a Fever of Anxiety for his Opinion.

Barbard's Brothers, p. 407.

trustful smile, and they shook hands, which they had not done upon his entrance.

Then with a few friendly injunctions to his patient to keep quiet Wulfrie withdrew, together with Mrs. Dumaresq, and Reinée waited in a sort of fever of anxiety for his opinion of the case. The housekeeper had come in—an old and faithful servant, invaluable in times of sickness; and Reinée slipped away to hear the doctor's report. He was in the hall when she reached the foot of the staircase. She went straight up to him with the confidence of an old friend.

"Tell me, please, Dr. Meynal."

He looked at her gravely, kindly, even tenderly.

"I am afraid your brother is very ill."

"I thought so—is it the same form as the one little Alice died from?"

"I fear it is."

"Do you think he will die, too?"

The question was very simply asked, perhaps that was why it sounded so infinitely pathetic. Wulfrie took in his warm clasp the two little cold hands that had pressed themselves closely together as she spoke. His voice shook a very little as he answered in deep and quiet tones—"We are in God's hands, and he is very good. We will ask him to

bless the means we use and to make him well. I would lay down my life to save him, if I could."

Reinée looked up gratefully. Something in the face of this strong man touched her very much. She had always felt him a true friend—at a time like this she seemed to need his presence in a way she could not have explained.

"Thank you," she said, softly. "I believe you would. You love Clive, I know."

"Yes," he answered, very quietly. "I love Clive—and I love you, too, Reinée." He bent his head as he spoke and kissed the hands he held tenderly and reverently, and without another word or look he was gone, leaving Reinée standing where he left her as one in a dream.

Clive, as Wulfrie Meynal had anticipated, passed the night fairly, but towards the following evening worse symptoms began to set in, and strong and painful measures had to be resorted to, that had the effect of exhausting him fearfully, leaving him sometimes almost more dead than alive.

He never, however, lost consciousness, and although speech was all but impossible, his glance would follow Reinée with loving tenderness, and she could understand his unspoken

wishes better than any one else could do. He often wanted to be read to—to hear the word of life from the Book that seems so beautifully appropriate to all the needs of this life, and especially to those of the sick and suffering.

Mrs. Dumaresq would sit silently by whilst Reinée read to her brother and talked to him softly of the thoughts and feelings they shared together, and of the great eternal home where partings were no more. What passed through her mind at these times no one could say; only there was a strange, new gentleness in her manner, and a peculiar tenderness not only to her son, but to her daughter, which they had never received from her before.

Wulfrie Meynal was backwards and forwards at the Hall continually during these trying days, and for two nights he sat up with Clive, battling against the terrible foe with a determined skill and power that seemed as if it must win the victory at last. Those who helped to nurse Clive said within themselves that if human skill could avail to save him, Dr. Meynal would pull him through.

One point in Clive's favor was his quiet resignation and willingness to die if the summons should come for him. Bright as had been his life, and happy as he had always

been, he was yet ready to lay all down without a murmur if it should be required of him.

This phase perplexed Mrs. Dumaresq not a little. She was alone with her son for a brief space one evening, she was murmuring to herself, half unconsciously:

"Oh, hard, hard, hard! Too terribly and cruelly hard."

Clive's eyes flashed open quickly.

"It is not hard to me, mother," he whispered, faintly.

"What is not, my boy?"

"Death," he answered, and a strange gleam of bright light seemed to flash over his face.

"Not hard to leave us all, and go away no one knows where?"

"Ah, but I do know," he answered, the light deepening strangely in his dark eyes. "It is to be with Christ, which is far better. And I shall not be lost—only gone—before."

Many words were impossible; even these few had exhausted him; but they gave food for much meditation to the mother who watched in silence by his bedside.

There came a crisis in the case at length—a terrible night never forgotten by any of those that shared Wulfric's watch. Mrs. Dumaresq and Reinée never left the sufferer

that night, and many times it seemed as if he must die in those terrible paroxysms of breathlessness; but Wulfric's skill and strength and tenderness seemed still to triumph over the relentless foe, and as the morning dawned they saw a change pass over the loved face.

The lines of pain and distress were smoothed away, a look of peaceful relief took the place of the old expression of resolute endurance. The breath came more easily and slowly, and the dusky flush faded to a marble whiteness. The watchers almost held their breath as these changes very gradually became apparent. Their eyes sought Wulfric's face, as if imploring him for a sign as to what this change might portend; but he stood beside the bed motionless as a statue, his fingers on the patient's pulse, watching, listening intently.

"Mother!" Clive's eyes flashed open suddenly and fixed themselves upon Mrs. Dumareshq, who approached and bent over him. What whispered petition he poured into her ear neither Wulfric nor Reinée could hear, as they stood together a little apart. They saw Mrs. Dumaresq raise her eyes and flash a quick glance at them. They saw a tremor cross her face; and they heard her say, quietly, "I promise, Clive."

Then the old sunny smile played once again over the still face. Was it the last flicker before the light went out?

"Kiss me, mother; kiss me, Reinée," he said.

And after they had done this his eyes closed, and presently Wulfric said, in low tones:

"Thank God, that is a natural sleep; the crisis is over, and I believe that he will live."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE REWARD.

AND Clive did live. That night was the turning-point in the case, and from that time he slowly mended. Some anxiety for him was still felt, for the severity of the attack had so drained away his strength that he was slow to win it back; but he did improve day by day and week by week, and although all those that loved him watched over him with trembling tenderness and care, yet there was every probability of a good recovery, and as Clive used to say playfully to his mother, "he only went on playing the invalid in order to look interesting and get his own way."

To Reinée he was, if possible, more affectionate than ever, and there was a sort of elation sometimes in his manner towards her that she could not quite understand. Reinée was herself strangely content and happy in those days. Her brother had been given back to her, her father's health was undoubtedly re-establishing itself, and from her mother she was now receiving a meed of quiet tenderness that was as new as it was sweet. Since they

had watched together over what had seemed as if it would be the dying bed of one so near and dear to both, mother and daughter had drawn very closely together, and beneath the influence of Clive's steadfast and tranquil confidence, Mrs. Dumaresq had learned many lessons which each day's experience was bringing home to her heart with new power.

What it was that she had promised to her son upon that night when all had believed that he must die, none knew save themselves.

Reinée never asked, but the day was coming when she was to know, and when that promise was to be kept.

Clive's was the last serious case of diphtheria that occurred in the place. It had been on the decline before, and by the time he was convalescent, the malady had quite disappeared; and under the improved sanitary conditions which Wulfric had urged upon the authorities, it seemed probable that the place would be more healthy than it had ever been before.

Wulfric had not spared himself during this time of sickness and trouble. He had worked hand and head, night and day, against the common foe, and had won golden opinions from his townfolk as well as from the sufferers themselves.

No one attempted to deny or even to doubt

that it was to his forethought, skill, and indomitable energy that they owed the salvation of many valuable lives, as well as the prevention of the spread of infection, and if the young doctor's popularity had been doubtful before, it was an established fact now.

But Wulfrie was not to escape scot-free from his unremitting exertions during this trying time. He did not, indeed, fall a victim to the scourge itself, being, as he expressed it, infection proof; but when once the strain had passed, and the need for such ceaseless labor abated, then the reaction began to set in, and the intense personal anxiety he had suffered on Clive's account helped to exhaust such strength as was left him after the month of perpetual toil.

He did not break down altogether, but he went about looking like the shadow of his former self, and each day found him more unfit for his work, and more worn out at its end than the one before had done.

Barbara and Celia pleaded in vain that he would spare himself and go away for a change and rest. He replied, with unwonted irritability that he was quite well, and told them "not to bother him any more."

Mrs. Meynal was less observant than usual at this time, being much engrossed by the

preparations for Celia's marriage, which was to take place some time early in the autumn; as Frank Leslie had had the presentation of a small country living bestowed upon him, and was to enter upon his duties early in October. He wished to take Celia with him to the new home, and the marriage was consequently to take place about the middle of September. This approaching event occupied the minds of mother and daughter very much, and it was only Barbara who had leisure to feel really distressed by fears for Wulfrie.

But there were others upon whom his wan looks and visible failure of strength were not lost. Reinée's sweet eyes rested upon him sometimes with a vague sense of trouble, and as Clive recovered more and more of his normal strength he, too, would look sharply at Wulfrie and draw his own conclusions about him.

And when the day came on which the young doctor recommended for his convalescent patient a change to a more bracing air, Clive stretched his limbs and laughed, as he answered, "I'll go gladly on one condition, Meynal, and that is that you go with me."

"I?" questioned Wulfrie, rather sharply.

"Yes, you," returned Clive. "I've had the idea in my head ever since a friend of mine

wrote to offer me the use of a shooting-box of his in Scotland that he won't want till the twelfth of August—a good six weeks off. It is a jolly place, all amongst the moors, where the air is like new wine, and will make new fellows of both of us. Come, Meynal, be reasonable; you want a change more than I do, and you know it. Come with me to Scotland next week."

Wulfric drew a long breath.

"There is nothing I should like better—if——"

"If what?"

"The practice I was thinking of."

"Oh, bother the practice! You must get a *locum tenens*. You know as well as I do that you are horribly seedy, and will break down sooner or later if you go on like this. Be a sensible fellow, and give up before you are forced."

Wulfric rested his aching head on his hand.

"I believe you are right, Clive; and it is inexpressibly tempting. When do you go?"

"Can you be ready by Monday morning? To-day is Thursday."

"Yes, I'll try. I dare say I can. It is very good your asking me, Clive. I shouldn't have energy to make a start alone."

"Exactly, and I don't feel man enough to travel without a medical attendant," answered Clive, his eyes twinkling with a sort of sleepy humor. "Then that is all settled. You'll be ready to start on Monday for town, and we will go north in a sleeping-car that night. Leave all the rest to me. You'll have quite enough on your hands without being bothered by plans."

This was true enough. Wulfrie was feeling wretchedly ill and exhausted, and the very sense of relaxation that came with the resolution to give up work and take a holiday seemed to make any kind of exertion the more difficult. But when he went home and told Barbara what had happened, he was relieved of all further trouble in the matter. She wrote the needful letters, securing him a substitute, let people know of the arrangement, settled matters as to the housing of the new comer, and promised to look after things in his absence as far as the poorer patients were concerned, and keep him well informed of everything.

Wulfrie was very grateful for the capable energy thus displayed by his sister, and his quiet thanks and the smile with which he told her that Fergus would find himself a lucky fellow some day, was reward enough to

the warm-hearted girl, who was never happier than when actively engaged in some service for her favorite brother.

Mrs. Meynal had no complaints now against Wulfrie. She was thoroughly aroused to anxiety by his looks, and entered with more energy than was usual with her into the arrangements to facilitate his early departure.

He was very listless and unwell himself, so much so that it was difficult for him to regard with much sense of pleasure the proposed change; still the idea of rest was very welcome, and he knew that when once he had got away from the association of the place where he had worked so hard, and known so much of anxiety and distress, he should be his old self again. Change and bracing up were all he needed, and he was glad that they were forced upon him without any need for exertion on his part.

Clive and his mother had a long talk after Wulfrie had left that day, the result of which was that Reinée and Mr. Dumaresq, together with a good many servants, started for Scotland the next day, whilst mother and son remained at the Hall till Monday, and took Wulfrie Meynal with them.

Wulfrie was feeling so languid and ill that he hardly troubled his head over the unex-

pected presence of Mrs. Dumaresq and her maid. He supposed at first that they were only going up to town; and even when he found out that they were in the Scotch express with him and his friend, it never occurred to him that it was a family party he was invited to join at the shooting box. He quite believed that he and Clive were to share it together.

They arrived there rather early in the morning, and both he and his patient were sufficiently fatigued with the long night journey to go straight to their rooms, and Wulfric slept until wakened by the westering sun, which was now slanting into the room, and glinting upon his face from the half-opened casement.

He found that it was seven o'clock and that he had slept nearly twelve hours. He felt better already. The keen, sharp air blowing off the heathery moorland stirred his pulses and gave him a new feeling of vigor. He was glad to think that the dinner hour could not be very far distant.

Remembering Mrs. Dumaresq's presence in the house he dressed himself with scrupulous propriety and descended to the drawing-room, but at the open door-way he paused with a start of surprise, for there was Reinée, the

only occupant of the room, standing besides the long French window, and singing softly to herself.

In a minute she had seen him and had advanced with a graceful and gracious welcome.

"But, Miss Dumaresq, how came you here? I thought it was only Clive who was coming north."

"Oh, no," answered Reinée, with a bright smile, "did you think we could spare our boy and lose sight of him whilst he is still so much the invalid. Not even our confidence in you, Dr. Meynal, could quite reconcile us to that. Did you think it was to the luxury of a bachelor-household you were coming? Clive should not have deluded you by that tempting proposition only to disappoint you in the end."

Reinée spoke with the frank gaiety so natural to her, but the light in the dark eyes bent upon her made her suddenly pause and color. They had not been alone together, those two, since the day on which Clive had been stricken down so nearly to death, when he had pressed his lips upon Reinée's hand, and told her that he loved her.

Neither of them had forgotten that moment, and it was suddenly present in both their

minds this evening as they stood together in the sunset glow.

"I am glad you are here, Reinée," said Wulfric, very quietly, with just a little hesitation upon the Christian name which robbed his use of it from the least suspicion of undue familiarity, "for I have something to say to you—something to explain—and this meeting will give me my opportunity."

Her eyes had been cast down, but now they were raised for a moment to his, and something in the sweet serenity and trustfulness he read in their calm depths made his heart beat with unwonted rapidity. The entrance, however, of Mr. Dumaresq put an end to the *tête-à-tête*, nor was it renewed during the pleasant evening that followed. Reinée played and sang to them, whilst Clive lay on the sofa and teased his sister, or caressed the deerhound whom they had found as a fixture in the house. Wulfric played chess and talked politics with Mr. Dumaresq, and he was somewhat closely watched and listened to by his hostess, although he was not in the least aware of it.

That night Mrs. Dumaresq followed Reinée into her room, and began to speak with an abruptness unusual with her.

"Clive tells me," she said, looking straight at her daughter, "that he believes you and

Wulfrie Meynal to be mutually attached. Is this so?"

Reinée's fair face flushed, but her glance did not falter.

"Mamma," she said, with a little quiver in her voice, "that is a very hard question to answer now. Please do not ask me any more, but trust me to tell you everything, if there is anything you ought to know; and to keep the promise I made you, never to—to—to act in great things without your consent."

Mrs. Dumaresq looked at her daughter steadily, her lips quivering slightly; then she took Reinée's face between her hands, and kissed it.

"You are a good child," she said, with more of feeling than was expressed by the words alone. "You have always been a loving and dutiful daughter, and I will not stand in the way of your future happiness. I can keep a promise, too, and it is after all less hard to sacrifice pride than love. If you discover in days to come that you and Wulfrie Meynal love one another, you may promise yourself to him with my free consent. Yes, child, I have learned some lessons of late, and I would rather, I trust now, see you married to a good and a God-fearing man, than the wife of one who could only bring you wealth and rank without happiness and peace."

"Mother! mother!" cried Reinée, breaking into sudden happy tears. "Oh, dear, dear mother, you have made me so happy—so very happy. I can never be glad or grateful enough."

The days that followed seemed to fly upon wings. It was not easy for Wulfrie to see Reinée alone, for he was in great request himself, and she was more shy than was usual with her. But in the cordial unconstrained atmosphere of that house it was impossible to be anything but happy and content, and Wulfrie was for once ready to let himself drift along and make no great efforts to take the management of events into his own hands.

His bodily health established itself rapidly, far more rapidly than did that of Clive, who still looked white and frail, and was incapable of any prolonged exertion. Wulfrie and Reinée were his devoted slaves, and it would be hard to say which of the three enjoyed this close companionship the most.

And Clive, who watched these two with the keenness of an unselfish love, was convinced of the correctness of the conclusion at which he had arrived before, and was anxious for an understanding to be arrived at between them, as he had a lingering fear lest some scruple on Wulfrie's part should allow him to consider

her wealth and birth as a barrier between them.

It was his doing at length that an excursion was planned to a distant ruin, to which he and his parents should proceed in a carriage, and the other two on horseback. This arrangement would give them the opportunity to say anything that might be upon their minds; and yet there was nothing strained in the situation. Wulfrie could speak or be silent as he chose.

Had Clive but known it, there was little need for words now between Wulfrie and his sister. That sympathy of soul that seems so often to bind two natures together, had, during the past week, been exercising its sweet spell over both their hearts; and the footing on which he was placed in the house made it plain to Wulfrie that he need not let pride or humility (it is sometimes hard to know which it should be called) stand in his way. He loved Reinée—he believed himself loved by her in return; and now he felt certain that her parents would not attempt to oppose her in following out the dictates of her own heart. A deep sense of happiness and well-being had settled upon his spirit; and for this each day of his life he thanked the great Giver of all good things.

As they rode over the wild, trackless moor together, and watched the wavering lights and shadows, as the sunshine chased the clouds across the quivering blue sky, a great sense of peace and delight came over them both. It seemed as if they two were in some beautiful new world, alone with each other, and with him who had made it very good.

At the top of a moorland ridge which commanded a wide view over ranges of purple hills and dark fir-crowned ridges, they drew rein by mutual consent and gazed before them as in a dream.

"Is it not lovely?" said Reinée, softly, at length.

Her voice seemed to break the spell of silence. Wulfrie took off his hat and shook back the tumbled hair from his brow, drawing a long breath as he did so. Then he turned and looked at her.

"Reinée," he said.

Her eyes sought his with a sweet, trusting confidence. She knew what was coming, and yet she did not blush or tremble. It seemed to her as if this supreme moment of her life had been lived many times over before.

He wheeled his horse round till he could look into her face, held out his hand to meet hers, and lifted it to his lips.

"Reinée," he said, in his deepest, lowest tone, "my Reinée—is it my Reinée?"

"Yes, Wulfrie," she answered, with a smile quivering over her face like moonlight upon rippling water, whilst the dew of happy tears stood in her eyes. He bent his head and kissed her, and lifting his hat again, he said, very quietly and reverently: "Thank God."

Perhaps no words could have chimed in better with Reinée's own feelings, or have set so sweet a seal upon their unspoken vows. She looked up in his face and read there all that depth of love that his lips could never frame in words, and which she felt it sweeter to be understood rather than spoken.

Perhaps no woman was ever more silently wooed and won than Reinée Dumaresq; but to her that silence of love was golden indeed, and she did not wish it to be broken.

He read her thought in her face, and smiled with a tender love and pride.

"You understand me, my Reinée," he said at last, very gently. "I need not try to tell you how I love you."

"No," she answered, softly. "I understand; I love you, too."

And then in the sweet silence of unspeakable content, they rode on together over the sunny moorland.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL.

WULFRIC MEYNAL was not destined to enjoy undisturbed the six weeks holiday he had promised himself.

Within three weeks of the day upon which he and Reinée had plighted their troth on the sunny moor, he was summoned to St. Hilda on important family business. It was Mr. Dart, the solicitor, who had written in the first instance, and he implied that the matter he had to communicate was of an agreeable nature, and advantageous to his old friends and clients.

Wulfric had entirely recovered his wonted health and strength. Happiness is the best tonic in all the world, and he had been enjoying life during the past weeks as perhaps he had never done in all his life before. A gracious sense of well-being had settled down upon him. He felt within him the spring of hope and confidence that makes a man strong to labour, that sweetens toil, and gives a zest to life, and does not fail nor falter, but strengthens with time and deepens with years.

Love had come into his life, a deep, true, God-given love, and it had transformed him at once into a new being.

He left Reinée at the call of duty, and proceeded home to learn what it was that had happened.

A wealthy bachelor uncle of Mrs. Meynal's had died. He was an eccentric old man, and had taken no notice of his niece during his lifetime, save by an occasional present of game, but at his death he had bequeathed his entire fortune to her and her children, raising them at once to wealth and independence.

The bulk of the property was Mrs. Meynal's for her lifetime, afterwards to pass to her children; but there was a substantial legacy to each one now, and to Wulfric was left the plate, pictures and furniture of the old man, as well as a valuable library. This bequest had been added in a codicil shortly before his death, with an intimation of the satisfaction it had given him to hear of his great-nephew's skill and success at St. Hilda, as well as of his benevolence and philanthropy.

The old man's affairs were in scrupulous order, and the legal formalities would be concluded as soon as the opening of the session permitted the transaction of business, and, meantime, the family could draw upon the

bankers for any advance in reason that they wanted, and felt at once what a difference to each one of them this unexpected access of wealth would make.

Of course, it relieved Wulfrie at once from the onus of the support of his mother, and the establishment she required for her comfort. He was no longer tied to St. Hilda, but could seek a wider sphere of action as he chose. He had private means of his own now, as well as excellent prospects for the future, and was, even from a worldly point of view, no such very unequal match for Reinée Dumaresq.

Reinée saw everything as he did, and it was agreed between them that so long as his mother needed him their home should be at St. Hilda.

"With you, Wulfrie, is home and happiness to me," she wrote, for they had not yet returned to the Hall, but were visiting friends in Scotland, and that exactly expressed Wulfrie's own state of mind. Let him once have Reinée for his wife, and he had no wish left to satisfy, save that he might do his duty by her and all those entrusted to him in whatsoever relation it might be.

Yet in the midst of all this brightness one dark shadow lay upon the home. Nothing

had been heard of Gerald all through the year. It seemed as if he had vanished utterly from the face of the earth. They had learned enough of his past life since he had left home to be filled with the greatest anxiety; but over his present hung mysterious silence that seemed as if it would never be broken.

It was a trouble they did not speak of very often, it seemed to lie too deep for words, but it was very keenly felt, and every possible step was taken to find him, and taken in vain. It sometimes seemed as if the certain news of his death would be a relief.

But all dark days have an end at length—and so did this one.

Autumn had followed the footsteps of summer, a bright, dry, healthy autumn that swept away all the illness that had hung about during the spring. The trees were yet in full foliage, the world was bright and sunny, and it seemed as if trouble and sorrow ought to be banished from all hearts.

Celia had been married that week, and had gone away to the new life and new home awaiting her. Wulfrie was thinking of the day when he should claim Reinée as his very own, and he smiled a little in the twilight as he often did now when alone. He was sitting beside his mother's couch, and Barbara

was reading at the window by the fading light.

Suddenly the door opened softly and Juliet Granby entered the room. She was closely followed by some one else, and she hung back a little in the shadow; but the other advanced quickly and knelt down beside Mrs. Meynal's couch.

"Mother," said a familiar voice, but there was a new ring in it since last it was heard, as well as a quiver of deep feeling—"Mother, I have come home."

There was a deep silence then for many minutes, broken only by the sobbing of both mother and son.

"Gerald! My boy—my boy!"

"Mother, mother, can you forgive me? Ah, if you only knew all you never could!"

"My boy! My boy! Oh, my Gerald, you have come back to me! What does anything else matter, so long as I have you safe?"

Feeling that mother and son should be left alone for awhile, Wulfrie and Barbara softly withdrew, together with Juliet Granby, who had brought the wanderer home.

They turned to her eagerly in the lighted hall without, to know the meaning of this strange, sudden return. It was soon explained.

"You know I went up to town three months



"Mother, I Have Come Home."

Barbara's Brothers, p. 482.

ago to your hospital, Wulfrie; what a different place it was from the Aylcester Infirmary! you cannot think how kind they all were nor how I enjoyed my visit. I had the run of the wards; I might go anywhere and see everything. It was most interesting. A week ago I went to visit the Convalescent Home out in the country, and there it was I found—Gerald.”

“Found Gerald!”

“Yes, getting better from a long illness, brought on, he says, by his own excesses in the first place, and then by the poverty and privation into which it led him. He was living there under another name—everyone knew he was a gentleman, but he would say nothing about himself. He has told me his tale, it is very dreadful and sad, but he has repented, oh, so humbly! I am sure the past must all be forgiven.” Tears stood in Juliet’s eyes, but she dashed them away and went on bravely, “He had resolved never, never to go home until he had redeemed the past, and won back for himself the position he had lost. He was so humble and yet so firm that I hardly knew him again. We had both learned the same lesson, I think,” she added, with a tremulous little smile.

“But in a very different school,” said Wul-

fric, gravely. "And so you brought him home, Juliet?"

"Yes," she answered, her color rising slightly. "He saw, by-and-by, that it would be right to do it, so he has come."

The drawing-room door opened and Gerald appeared.

"Juliet," he said, "I want you."

He took her by the hand and led her towards his mother's couch. Wulfrie and Barbara followed at a little distance.

"Mother," he said, "it was Juliet who found me, and it is she who has brought me home to you. We love one another, and she is going to trust me, and to wait for me until I can make her my wife. You will love her as a daughter, will you not?"

Mrs. Meynal opened her arms to embrace the girl, and Gerald continued speaking in a more manly way than they had ever heard him do before.

"We came home yesterday," he said. "Mrs. Granby welcomed us, and to-day I went to see Mr. Dart. He has promised most kindly to receive me exactly on the same footing as he would have done eighteen months ago, when I finished my articles, if I had not been so obstinately set against the law, and so conceited about my talents. He told me about the

legacy that has come to me. It will take about two-thirds to wipe out the miserable debts I have contracted, and which I thought would weigh me down for years. The rest will be a sort of nest egg, and in a few years time I hope to make a home which I can ask Juliet to share with me; mother, you will give me your blessing, I know. I dare not ask to live under your roof again, but, at least, I may hope to see you often, and to show by my future life how utterly I repent the past."

"My boy, my boy, come to me now," cried the mother, in deep yet happy agitation, "your mother's house shall always be your home—come to it now, and bring your wife with you; it shall be her home, too, as she is yours. Listen, my dear, dear, boy; I am a rich woman now, but what are riches to me if I am to lose all my children? Celia is gone already; Wulfrie will soon make a home of his own, and everybody tells me that he has a career before him and cannot always hide his talents here. Barbara must leave me shortly; I do not wish to stand in the way of her happiness—but you, Gerald, can you not stay and let Juliet be the daughter of my old age? My dear," she said, stroking the girl's bowed head, "they have told me that you do not like the quiet life at St. Hilda; I do

not want to be selfish or unreasonable—but—but——”

“Oh, Mrs. Meynal—mother, if you will let me call you so—please do not remind me of those foolish, wicked thoughts of discontent and pride of which I am so heartily ashamed; I love St. Hilda now. I know that it is not where we are but what we are that makes us happy or miserable. If you want me, I will come; I will love you and nurse you, and be a daughter to you, if you will let me. I have never known a mother of my own, but Gerald's mother will be mine now!”

Mrs. Meynal clasped the girl in her arms. She had known her from childhood and had been fond of her; but this bond was something altogether new and sweet.

Gerald turned to Wulfrie and held out his hand.

“I have not had time to speak to you yet,” he said; “I am quite ashamed to look you in the face, but you are a brother that gives one confidence. You never bear malice.”

His voice shook with a feeling he was afraid would over-master him. This home-coming tried his self-command sorely.

Wulfrie smiled in cordial, brotherly fashion.

"I should not be worth much if I did. My dear boy, I need not say how glad I am to welcome you back—like this."

Gerald's face quivered. He drew his brother aside and said, in low, broken tones: "If you knew all the slough I have been dragged through, I wonder if you could welcome me still."

Wulfric laid his hand upon Gerald's shoulder and looked earnestly at him.

"It has, at least, taught you a lesson you are not likely to forget, Gerald. Let bygones be bygones; we did not quite understand one another in old days, and the fault was mine as well as yours. Had I been wiser I might have helped you more; but, at least, for the future we will be friends, and that will atone for much."

"You are worth calling a friend, Wulf," said Gerald, with a dawning smile; "you are the best fellow that ever lived, and I am proud to call you my brother. You are going to get your reward now, though, so I hear. I wish you joy, old fellow, with all my heart. You deserve it if ever any man did."

A light shot into Wulfric's eyes and illuminated all his face.

"Thanks, Gerald," he answered, heartily. "I don't deserve it; but I am very happy."

That evening sitting round the fire all together, they listened to Gerald's tale. He told it with a quiet simplicity and truthfulness that made it sound doubly pathetic, yet it gave them all a confidence in him that, perhaps, nothing could have so quickly established.

Mrs. Meynal sobbed aloud when she heard of the privations which her son had endured, and Barbara put her arms round his neck and cried, vehemently: "Oh Gerald, Gerald, if we had only known!"

But he answered with a grave gentleness new and very strange in him: "It was better as it was, Barbara. My motives were not pure, some were very unworthy, and yet I am glad they sufficed to deter me from appealing to you. I wanted a very hard lesson, and I have had it. I do not think anything much lighter than what I suffered would have made a lasting impression on me. Sometimes I am afraid to trust myself, even now; but—" he paused, glanced at Juliet, whose eyes were bright with unwonted tears, and added, in very low, yet firm tones, "Juliet and I have talked it over together, and she has helped me to understand. It is not in my own strength I trust now; but in something better."

Barbara's lips caressed his hair, which began to show silver lines here and there.

"Dear, dear Gerald!" she whispered. "If only I had been a better, kinder sister to you in old days. If you only knew how it has grieved me since! Can you forgive and forget?"

He took her face between his hands and kissed it. A smile played about his eyes and lips, something of the old, mischievous smile—though only a shadow of its former self.

"Most fiery of Babs, I do not know you again, so tame, so gentle, so womanly! Is it Fergus who has so metamorphosed you? My dear little hot-headed generous sister, do you think I cannot see now whose fault it was we bickered and quarreled so in old days? Yours were home truths, Barbara, but they were truths; my arguments were shallow sophistries, and you had wit to know it if I had not."

"Some home truths are better left unsaid," answered Barbara, smiling. "I was very hasty and hard in those days; but I was punished when we thought——"

"That I should never come home? So you are really glad to have the black-sheep back? Little sister, you do not know how very humble, yet how very happy such a welcome makes a man, who has gone through experiences like mine."

Later in the evening he sought his brother in his study, and spoke to him with great seriousness about his future prospects.

"It seems altogether so much more than I ought to have. I am half afraid to take the good things offered me," he said, with a thoughtful humility that was perfectly sincere. "Wulfrie, do you think I ought to make Juliet my wife soon, and come and live here with our mother, as she has begged me to do? Ought I to yield to her wishes and to my own, or would it be more wise and right to wait—to insist on a time of probation—to prove to myself and others that I am—fit—for such a position?"

Wulfrie looked at his brother with a grave smile in his eyes.

"My dear boy," he said, "I look at things in this way—our lives are not our own to plan out just at will. We are surrounded by circumstances beyond our own control. We believe—I think I may say we now, Gerald—that there is One who, if we will let him, guides and rules our lives, and gives us happiness or sorrow as he sees it best. To my thinking, it seems just now as if your path were being smoothed out before you. Perhaps the living presence of wife and mother in your home will be your surest safeguard—

save One—from ever falling into temptation again. Take your happiness as God's gift, Gerald, and use it in his service."

Gerald grasped his brother's hand and held it in his.

"Thank you, Wulfrie, I will try to do so."

And then he went to find Juliet, to talk to her of the future.

"It does not seem a dismal life to you, I hope—that of life at St. Hilda, as the wife of an embryo solicitor?"

Juliet looked at him rather as Wulfrie had done.

"No, Gerald. I have learned my lesson better than that. There is work for us all to do whatever we are and whatever are our circumstances. St. Hilda is very dear to me now," she held out her hand which he raised to his lips. "I think I am quite cured of my discontent now, Gerald."

And when Juliet went home and told her grandmother all that had happened, the old lady held her in her arms, and then looking into her face with that peculiarly bright smile of hers, said, "And so I am not going to lose my granddaughter altogether? My dear, your news is very pleasant to me; and I believe that a happy and a useful life is opening before you. God grant it may be so, and that many may bless

the day when first you elected to settle down amongst us. St. Hilda will be glad to keep you, I know, and I think you will, after all, be pleased to stay."

"Yes, grandmother," was the answer. "I am very glad indeed, and very happy."

CHAPTER XXVI

CONCLUSION.

On board Clive Dumaresq's yacht one lovely day in late November, stood Wulfrie and Reinée Meynal leaning over the rail of the captain's bridge, watching the blue waves race past their light little vessel.

Clive himself, sailing master of his own craft, was lying in a hammock upon deck, lazily enjoying the sunshine and fresh breeze. He was still rather wan and weak, despite the months that had elapsed since he was smitten down by illness. He was always merry and bright, and made a joke of his slow recovery, saying that it was only an excuse for being lazy and having a pleasant fuss made over his interesting self. But the fact remained that he did not pick up as he ought to have done, and that is how it came about that Wulfrie and Reinée spent their honeymoon upon his yacht, and that he accompanied them upon the cruise.

Wulfrie was convinced that the sea would set him up as nothing else could do, for he could get all the needful fresh air and change

without any exertion whatever. But he was manifestly unfit to be alone, so the only thing to be done was to find congenial company for him. Scotland grew too cold for him, and visiting became a fatigue. His old companion, Trevelyan, was out of the question now, for he had taken the greatest umbrage at Reinée's engagement, and repudiated in consequence the friendship of the whole family. They took his desertion with an equanimity that would greatly have enraged him had he been aware of it, and especially would he have resented the popularity with all the family that Wulfrie had now attained. Clive liked him so much that there seemed nothing strange to either in the final settlement of the plan which made him a participator in the wedding tour. As for Reinée her love for her brother was so great that his presence only enhanced her happiness.

Clive had justified Wulfrie's expectations, and had picked up with most encouraging rapidity when once they put to sea. There seemed no reason to doubt that before the close of the voyage he would be quite his old self again.

The Mediterranean was very blue that day; the white-crested waves leaped high in the golden sunshine; the breeze whistled past and

hummed in the rigging with a dreamy, soothing music.

Clive dozed luxuriously in his hammock below, and Reinée and her husband stood together on the bridge above. They had put into port that morning for their letters, and had been discussing the satisfactory items of home news.

"I am glad Fergus has got so good an appointment. I think Barbara will rather enjoy going abroad and seeing new scenes and foreign life," remarked Wulfrie.

"They will soon be married now, I suppose," said Reinée, "for he has to start within three months."

"Yes, and of course he will wish to take her with him—that is only natural after so much waiting. There will be Juliet, however, to fill the blank for our mother. Juliet has quite grown into the family since she brought Gerald home; and Mrs. Granby is so beautifully unselfish in giving her up without a murmur."

"She is so good," returned Reinée, "I always felt that about her from the very first." A thoughtful look came into the girl's eyes, and she added, presently: "Do you know, Wulfrie, I cannot help thinking it rather strange that the one of us girls—I

mean by that Barbara and Juliet and myself—who seemed to have such a strong dislike to St. Hilda and its quiet life, should be the very one to settle down there for good, and that so cheerfully and happily. I think it is rather beautiful, too—if you know what I mean, and a little pathetic.”

Wulfrie smiled a little.

“We have not quite done with St. Hilda ourselves yet, little wife.”

“No, I know, and I am glad; for papa likes the Hall so much, and so does Clive; but you know they all say that you will have to go to London by and by. Your papers are making you quite famous. I quite believe you will have a partnership offered to you by one of the doctors you worked under before you came here.”

“It is possible,” answered Wulfrie, looking away over the sea thoughtfully. “Once upon a time that prospect would have seemed to me the acme of personal happiness.”

“And does it not do so now?” asked Reinée.

His glance turned upon her with that peculiar tenderness of expression only possible in strong and powerful faces.

“My happiness now is bound up in something sweeter and holier than professional

ambition," he said, putting his arm quietly about her as they stood, "in the love of the wife that God has given me."

Reinée looked up with the sparkle of happy tears upon her eyelashes.

"Wulfrie," she said, with a little quiver in her voice, "I am so glad you feel that it is God who has given us to one another. That is just how I feel about it."

Wulfrie stooped and kissed the sweet face of his young wife, and then lifting his hat, stood bareheaded in the golden sunshine.

"God has been very good to me," he said, with simple, manly reverence. "I hope I shall never be tempted to forget that; I trust he will help us to lead such lives as will do him honor and service in the way that he may think best."

"Yes, Wulfrie," answered Reinée, softly, "let us give ourselves and our lives to him, for is it not he who has given us to one another?"

And with that simple vow of dedication upon their lips, Wulfrie and Reinée began their new life together.





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